The SHAPING of ENGLISH LITERATURE

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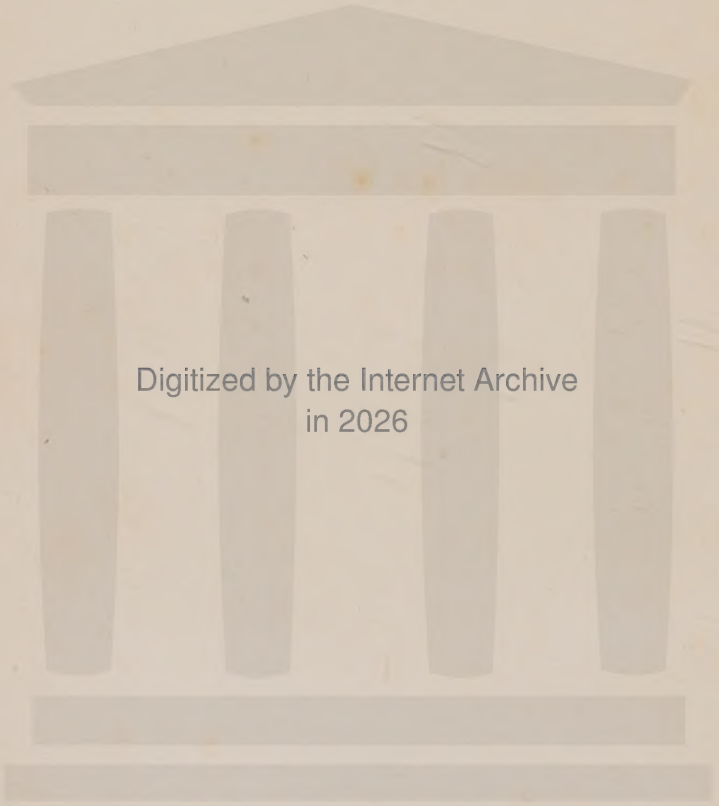
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THE SHAPING OF ENGLISH LITERATURE

no drede ne fere no thynge/ For I ſhalle not accuſe the/ For I ſhalle ſhewe to hym another way/ And as the hunter came/ he demaunded of the ſheepherd yf he had ſene the wulf paſſe/ And the ſheepherd with the hede and of the eyen ſhewed to the hunter the place where the wulf was / & with the hand and the tongue ſhewed alle the contrarye / And incontynent the hunter vnderſtood hym wel / But the wulf whiche perceyued wel all the fayned maners of the ſheepherd fled awey/ ¶ And within a lytyll whyle after the ſheepherd encountred and mette with the wulf/ to whome he ſayd/ paye me of that I haue kepte the ſecrete/ ¶ And thenne the wulf anſwerd to hym in this maner / I thanke thyn handes and thy tongue/ and not thyn hede ne thyn eyen / For by them I ſholde haue ben betrayd/ yf I had not fledde awey/ ¶ And therfore men muſt not truſte in hym that hath two faces and two tongues/ for ſuche folke is lyke and ſemblable to the ſcorpion/ the whiche enoynteth with his tongue/ and prycketh ſore with his taylle

A Page from Æsop's "Fables"
Reduced. Printed in Westminster by Caxton, 1483.

Fr.

THE SHAPING OF ENGLISH LITERATURE

AND THE READERS' SHARE IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF ITS FORMS

BY

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PREFACE

IN the making of a country's literature two classes of people are concerned—the writers and the readers, or hearers; and though the writers must of necessity take the more important part, the readers are not without influence. What they ask for the writers take care to supply. The insistent demand, "Tell me a story," which men of all nations have made from the earliest ages has tended to produce a great body of literature, which has taken in succeeding generations the particular form—epic, romance, drama, novel—that has best suited the circumstances and the capacity of the readers. So it has been, also, in other branches of literature. Poets have made songs, divines have preached sermons, travellers have painted pictures of far-off lands, controversialists have argued and disputed, all with regard to the needs and the tastes of a crowd of undistinguished people whose names are not recorded in any history of literature.

We can all be readers, though few of us can be great writers; and, therefore, when we have paid our homage to the great figures throned high above us we shall surely have some interest to spare for the lowlier company which is made up of our comrades and our equals. We look at the readers of past ages, and see ourselves as we should have been had we lived in their day. If we had wanted our stories, our poems, our pleasant jests, and our words of inspiration, we should have had to seek them where our ancestors sought them. We should have hailed with joy the gay company of minstrels approaching our village. We should have stood for long hours in the street or the market-place while the pageants of the miracle play passed before us. We should have gathered in the churchyards to hear the sermons of famous preachers. We should have crowded to the inn-yards and the theatres when the word went round that the

players were expected. We should have drunk our coffee at our favourite coffee-house and discussed the latest news with our neighbours. We should have bought romances and novels in many volumes and wept freely over them. We should have paid our subscription to the circulating library with the feeling that we were doing something very new and adventurous. We should have hung about bookstalls, and made with care our small selection of high-priced books.

This book is an attempt to tell the story of English readers from the days of the Saxons to the end of the eighteenth century. It is of necessity merely an outline, the outstanding epochs only being considered. Incidents have been adapted and fictitious characters, scenes, and incidents introduced for purposes of illustration. It is dedicated to all those readers of to-day who feel any interest in the large and honourable company of readers who have gone before them.

A. C.

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THE SHAPING OF ENGLISH LITERATURE

CHAPTER I

THE SCOP AND THE GLEEMAN

THE history of the Englishman in England begins with the coming of three strange ships to the Kentish shore in the summer season of the year 449; and if we want to know what these ships were like, and how they reached our coasts, we must turn to the great Saxon book the epic of *Beowulf*:

> The warriors, equipped in bright armour, climbed into the ship; the heroes pushed off the well-joined wood on its longed-for adventure; over the waves, like a bird, sped the foamy-necked ship, the wind in its sails, until its curved prow so far had travelled that the seafarers saw the shore-cliffs gleam, the broad sea-nesses. Then they stepped quickly on the plain, fastened their vessel, their birnies clanged, their war-weeds jangled.

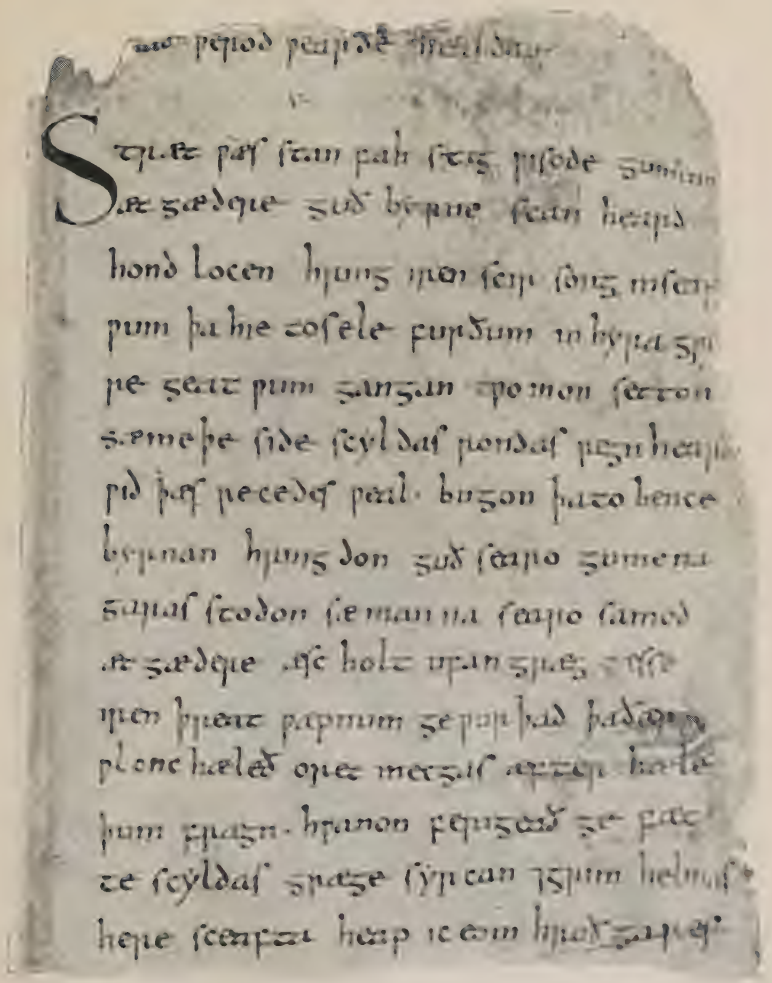
This is a description of the voyage of Beowulf and his comrades toward their great adventure; but it will stand almost equally well for the coming of the Saxons under Hengist and Horsa. Only in this later expedition there were three ships instead of one, and a host of fighting men instead of the small band of heroes; the "shore-cliffs" were those whose white curve indents the little Isle of Thanet; and the "sea-nesses" were the low headlands of Ebbsfleet.

The Saxons, who had left their native Holstein to help Vortigern, King of Kent, drive out the Picts and Scots, very speedily accomplished the work they had set out to do. Then, finding the land fair and kindly, they turned their arms against the harassed Britons and took the kingdom of Kent for their own. Following them there came, year by year, horde after horde of fierce Norsemen,

who fought their way from the coast inland, slaying and burning, making slaves of their prisoners, and driving the wretched remnant of the people toward the mountains of the west. And, as soon as they had cleared a corner of it, they set to work to make out of the Romanized island of Britain the England that is our own home to-day.

They made it after the fashion of the country they had left, building up villages and townships where groups of kinsfolk settled together, dwelling in clusters of low wooden houses, which were surrounded by a wide ring of common land. The great hall of the eorl rose higher than the homesteads of his followers, but, like them, it was built of wood and roofed with shingles. In the midst of the village stood the great oak where the freemen met to make laws and mete out justice. Near by was built the heathen temple, with altars to Odin and Thor and the other gods whom these men and their fathers had worshipped in their own land. They were warrior-gods and mighty fighters, strong of arm and rough of tongue. To the Norsemen fighting was the great business and the great joy of life, and they would have thought little of a god who could not swing a huge battleaxe and break skulls with a blow of his clenched fist. In their new home they kept their old faith, and offered their accustomed sacrifices with the old rites. When there was no fighting going on they tilled the land and tended the cattle that they had wrested from the Briton, but for many generations their hands were apter to grasp the battleaxe than the spade.

They brought very little with them from over the sea, for the land they had left was poor and barren, yielding but a scanty living. Most of them had chosen to sail the seas rather than toil at home for little reward, and these had been daring adventurers, living from hand to mouth, with no care to hoard up treasure. But one thing they brought for which we to-day owe them our grateful thanks, and that was a store of song and story, not written down, but safely packed away in their heads, and ready to be handed on to their sons and their grandsons. These songs and stories were all of war and bloodshed, of rough fighting



A Fragment of the Manuscript of "Beowulf"
In the British Museum

and wild adventure. They told of the deeds of the Norseman's gods, and of the heroes of his race who had fought boldly against men and beasts and monsters. They were skilfully fashioned, and they had a strange music, not flowing or tuneful, but half stirring and half sad, which suited the temper of the race.

These poems were not, at least at first, the work of professed poets, but grew up among the people. When a great deed was done the praise of the hero was in the mouths of his family and his tribe. Each man told the story as pleased him best, setting his words to a low, monotonous chant ; sometimes the harp was brought out, and the singer struck an occasional chord. Often, these songs were little noted, and passed out of men's minds as some new deed of valour claimed its share of praise and attention. But now and then it happened that a song struck the fancy of the hearers, so that they did not let it go, but repeated it many times to different audiences, and its fame spread. Fresh details were added ; first one and then another made alterations and improvements. Perhaps two songs became favourites at about the same time, and gradually these were joined to make one, their separate origin being quickly forgotten ; or an episode from an older story was recalled and incorporated. Presently the composition reached the dignity of a lay, and was passed from one to another, until it became known far and wide. Occasionally it would attract the notice of one of the professed minstrels, who were called scops (" shapers of song ") or gleemen (" bringers of joy "). Then its advance was marked and rapid. The scop took it, mended its versification, trimmed and shaped it, polished its language. Then he added it to his store of songs, some of which were, possibly, entirely his own composition, some borrowed from his brother-singers, but most, like this one, born among the people.

For many years after the Norsemen settled in England the songs that they made were of the same character as those they had made in their earlier home. Life was still to them a fierce fight against seen and unseen foes, of

which the unseen were the more dreaded. Outside the stockade of each village lay the dark, mysterious forest, full of fierce human enemies and wild beasts and fearful shapes that were neither beast nor human ; or even worse than the forest were the dreary marsh-lands, where strange lights burned and loathly fiends lay in wait to drag mortals down into the black miry depths. The sea that beat upon the coast, though its storms could not daunt a race of vikings, had its unsounded deeps and its magic caves whence came hideous water-fiends to bear away victims in their fierce claws and make a horrid meal of them in the fearsome halls below. The shining summer face of our beautiful land, its bright meadows and quiet streams impressed our Saxon forefathers in those early times far less than did the dark terrors of the winter. And so it was long before the songs lost the characteristic mournful note which showed that their makers had seen much and thought much of the darker side of life.

Not many of the songs have come down to us, for it was only in a few cases that chance led to one of them, which had been preserved in the memories of the people, being written down at a later date. For more than a hundred and fifty years after they settled in this island the Saxons had no written literature. The scops were the keepers of the treasures of song, and were held in very high honour. Each eorl had at least one scop in his band of personal followers—his *comitatus*, as it was called. Odin himself, it was said, had been the first scop, and from him some touch of the godlike had descended to each member of the body. The scop did not fight, yet among this race of fighting men there was none who took a higher place than he. It was he who gave to the fighting man his fame. If the scop did not sing of brave deeds done the memory of them soon faded away.

It was the custom for all the followers of the eorl to gather in his great mead-hall for the evening meal, and when this was over came the singer's hour of glory. " A thane looked to the task set him, to bear in his hands the fretted ale stoup, and poured out the shining mead."

Then the scop took his harp and stood forward on the dais that was raised at one end of the hall for the lord and his kinsfolk. He looked down the mead-hall, dim with smoke that rose from the great wood-fire in the middle. He saw the crowd of noble warriors sitting on long wooden benches or standing together in groups, drinking, shouting, quarrelling. He caught the sudden gleam of leaping flame from fire or torch on the burnished shields that decked the walls, on the silver mead-flagons, on the gold collars and bracelets worn by the warriors. Then he sounded, with voice and harp, one loud, clear note. The din sank; the bearded faces were turned toward him like the faces of children when the story hour has come.

Chanting in a low monotone he began his lay, striking now and then a few notes upon his harp. On and on he went, never stopping, or faltering through all the long story. Sometimes his hearers shouted in a frenzy of delight; sometimes they murmured deep words of wrath or of sorrow; sometimes there was a great breathless silence. So the tale went on to its end, the singer struck his last chord, and laid his harp aside.

If the lay had pleased the eorl he bestowed rich gifts on the singer—rings and bracelets of gold, silver cups, and burnished armour; or even gave him land to hold as his own and rank that he might stand among the greatest thanes. The wife of the eorl bore the wine-cup to him with her own hands, speaking gracious words. The warriors in the hall shouted his praises and pledged him in deep draughts of mead.

When the scop travelled about the country he was received everywhere with honour. There is an old poem called *Widsith* (which means *The Far Traveller*), which was probably made in the fourth century, and tells the story of one of these wandering singers. "Many men and rulers have I known," he says, "through many strange lands have I fared, throughout the spacious earth, parted from my kinsmen. Therefore I may sing in the mead-hall how the high-born gave me gifts."

The common people—the ceorls and labourers who lived

in the villages and the little towns—could not gather in the mead-hall to hear the scop's song. But they had singers of their own—singers who were not as famous as the eorl's man and not as skilled, yet who could put together the songs that the people made roughly but adequately. Very often, too, they picked up some of the most popular of the lays sung by the scops. If they had not the national harp they had the smaller rote, which was shaped like the lyre of Apollo and strung with wire. Each village, we think, had one or more of these singers ; and there were many who wandered from village to village, playing in the courtyard of the eorl's dwelling and the hall of the lesser thanes, in the soldier's camp, or on the village green. For audience they had stout Saxons in the long blue linen tunic of the ceorl or the war-sark of the fighting man, and tall, comely women, bright-haired and blue-eyed. These, like their betters, loved to hear stories of brave deeds and fierce fighting, and though they could not reward the singer in the lordly fashion of the great eorl they gave him freely such gifts as were in their power, and held him in high honour.

As time went on and the Saxons increased in numbers and in wealth their singers began naturally to separate into classes. The scops of the highest repute were attached to the Court of the king, which year by year grew more stately and more splendid ; or they were attached to the scarcely less magnificent following of one of the great nobles. Then came those of lesser note, who followed masters of smaller renown. Lowest of all came the travelling singer, and to him gradually the term " gleeman " became restricted.

The opening of the eighth century saw the scop at his highest point of glory ; after that he slowly declined in honour and importance. But the singers of lower rank remained popular up to and after the Conquest. The songs which they sang changed very little in character during these years, and such changes as came to them were due to a new influence at work in the country, to be noticed in the next chapter.

CHAPTER II

THE CHURCH AND THE SAXONS

NEARLY a hundred and fifty years had passed since the landing of the Saxons in Britain, and they had spread themselves over the country and established a number of independent kingdoms. The struggle with the Britons was not over, but it had slackened, and many of the Saxons had put by their war-sarks, and in the smock of the farmer or the labourer were tilling the ground and gathering in the harvest. But the war-sark was only put by, and could be brought out at a moment's notice; for the Saxon was still a fighting man, and his gods were still the fighting gods Odin and Thor and Tiw.

Then in the summer season of the year 597 there came another ship sailing toward the little harbour by Ebbsfleet. This time it was not a stout dragon-ship, with curved prow and shining figurehead, skimming like a bird over the waves, but a stately Roman galley, moving to the dip of many oars. From it there landed on the Saxon shore a company of black-robed monks, whose leader sent, by the mouth of an interpreter, this greeting to Ethelbert, King of Kent: "We bring you a joyful message, and those who take advantage of it shall assuredly have everlasting joys in heaven, and a kingdom that will never end, with the living and true God."

King Ethelbert listened to the words of the messenger, and pondered them. He had heard something of this new religion, for it was the religion of his wife, Bertha, daughter of the Christian King Charibert of Paris; and he was inclined to hear more. So he sent back an answer appointing a day when the monks might speak before him; and he ordered that they should be lodged meanwhile in the Isle of Thanet, where they had landed, and be supplied with all necessaries.

A few days later he received them, sitting in state on a broad stretch of open down, for he thought that in the free air there would be little chance for the monks to practise any magical arts. His wife sat by his side, his thanes stood round, and on the edge of the green down the people crowded and stared. The black-robed procession advanced, Augustine, their leader, holding high a silver cross, his forty monks following, and singing in a foreign tongue a solemn litany.

The King listened attentively while Augustine preached a long, impassioned sermon, setting forward the principles of the Gospel of Christ. His words were repeated to Ethelbert by the interpreter, and when the sermon was finished the King was still more inclined to look favourably upon the new faith. He put off making a decision until he had had time to think further on the matter, but he invited the monks to enter his city of Canterbury, and ordered that they should be honourably lodged and cared for. The solemn procession re-formed, and, led by the shining cross, returned by the way it had come. Later the monks made their way to Canterbury, chanting, as they entered the city, " We beseech Thee, O Lord, in all Thy mercy, that Thy anger and wrath be turned away from this city, and from the holy house, because we have sinned. Hallelujah."

This was a great day for England—a great day for her history, her religion, and also for her literature. A new and arresting idea had been put before her people ; and ideas are the stuff of which literature is made. To a nation that worshipped strength there was presented a God Who had accepted weakness, Who had died unavenged at the hands of His enemies. In His love and compassion " the White Christ " was something like their own Balder, the only one among the Norseman's gods who was gentle and merciful. But even Balder was a warrior, strong and practised, and a terrible vengeance had been exacted for his death.

In the days that followed, when the strange teachers were going about the land, preaching their gospel in the open air or in the ruins of churches that the Romans had built and the Saxons had destroyed, the people must often

have spoken of the White Christ in wonder, perhaps in derision. It is true that Paganism, as an active religion, was by this time almost dead, but belief in the old gods remained, and the old ideals were still powerful. Yet the teaching of the monks gradually won its way. "Several believed and were baptized," the historian Bede tells us, "admiring the simplicity of their innocent life and the sweetness of their heavenly doctrine." After a time King Ethelbert, "induced by the unspotted life of these holy men, and their delightful promises, which by many miracles they proved to be most certain, believed and was baptized," and then "greater numbers began daily to flock together to hear the Word, and, forsaking their heathen rites, to associate themselves, by believing, with the unity of the Church of Christ."

The old churches were repaired and new ones were built, and they were all made beautiful within by the labours of the monks and with treasures sent from Rome. The mass of the Saxon people looked on curiously, but without any very keen interest. Some of those who had been baptized were, without doubt, true converts to Christianity, but most had simply followed the King as they might have followed him had he set a new fashion in fighting or hunting. The old religion had never meant very much in their daily lives; it did not seem likely that the new religion would mean any more.

There was one church which the Romans had built, on the site where Canterbury Cathedral now stands, that had not been completely thrown down by the invading Saxons; and this church the monks speedily put in such order that services might be held in it. Thither on Sunday mornings the Saxons came flocking, as they had been bidden to do. This fashion of keeping each week the White Christ's day with solemn, reverent observances, and without working, fighting, or feasting, seemed to them one of the strangest and most incomprehensible of the new customs the monks had brought; but they had been told that the great God of the new religion commanded it, and so they gathered obediently at the church. Thanes and ceorls, farmers,

ploughmen, shepherds, handicraftsmen, they came clattering in, their bared heads held high, their weapons at their side; and with them came their wives and daughters, as proud, and almost as stalwart as themselves. They stared curiously at the unfamiliar things around them; there were signs of watchfulness and even of hostility in their bearing, as if they were on their guard against giving a too ready allegiance to the religion that had come to them through strangers from an unknown land across the sea.

But the Saxon, though he was fierce and stubborn in temper, and though he had not the quick imagination of the Celtic races, nor the love of beauty that marked the men of the South, was neither too stupid nor too stolid to feel the influences with which the monks were careful to surround him. He looked down dim aisles toward the eastern altar where, in a blaze of light, the cross that bore the suffering Christ was set up; he watched the priests, in gorgeous vestments, moving with stately, reverent gestures before it. He saw the censer swing and the clouds of incense rise; heard the solemn music, and the low, strange chanting of the monks. The strain of wild poetry that lay deep within him responded to all that was mysterious and awe-inspiring in the service, and the full and detailed ritual excited his childish curiosity. So that when, by and by, one of the monks went up into the pulpit, and began, in the native tongue, of which by this time he had learned enough for everyday purposes, to tell some story from the life of the White Christ, the faces that were turned toward him were as eager and interested as those that were used to turn toward the scop or the gleeman. Here were more stories, new stories, and if they were of a different character from the old that, for a time at least, only added to their charm.

The monks were quick to see that here was a means of gaining a hold upon their formidable converts. They made their ritual even fuller and more impressive, using it to illustrate the effect of the stories they told.

When Palm Sunday came round the congregation gathered outside the church to watch with interest and delight while a priest, mounted on an ass, rode round the churchyard,

followed by a procession of priests and choristers bearing palms. As the procession drew near the church there were loud cries of " Hail ! Hail ! " from boys standing upon the roof of the porch—and that morning in his sermon the priest told his people how Christ entered in triumph into Jerusalem. Good Friday followed, and then from the altar, unlit now and sad with sombre hangings, the cross was taken, wrapped in a linen cloth, and placed in a box which represented the sepulchre. On Easter morning priests, taking the parts of the angel and the holy women, talked together by this sepulchre ; the cross had previously been removed from the box, and now the linen cloth in which it had been wrapped was held up to show that Christ was risen indeed.

On Christmas Day a crib was placed behind the altar, and an image of the Christ child laid within it ; priests and choristers, entering by the west door, advanced toward the crib, singing a hymn, then knelt down and worshipped.

These little dramas interested and delighted the story-loving Saxons ; and the clergy, noting this, made the dramatic element in the services more and more prominent as the years went on. A document drawn up by an assembly of bishops, abbots, and abbesses at Winchester in the reign of King Edgar (959–975) shows that it was recognized as a powerful instrument " for the strengthening of faith in the unlearned vulgar and neophytes." Very full directions are given for the ceremonial to be observed on Good Friday and Easter Sunday. The clergy are bidden at Matins on Easter morning :

> While the third lesson is being chanted, let four brethren vest themselves. Let one of these, vested in an alb, enter as though to take part in the service, and let him approach the sepulchre without attracting attention and sit there quietly with a palm in his hand. While the third respond is chanted, let the remaining three follow, and let them all, vested in copes, bearing in their hands thuribles with incense, and stepping delicately, as those who seek something, approach the sepulchre. These things are done in imitation of the angel sitting in the monument and the women with spices coming to anoint the body of Jesus. When therefore he who sits there beholds the

> three approach him like folk lost and seeking something let him begin in a dulcet voice of medium pitch to sing *Quem quaeritis*. And when he has sung it to the end, let the three reply in unison, *Jhesu Nazarenum*. So he, *Non est hic, surrexit sicut praedixerat. Ite, nuntiate quia surrexit a mortuis.* At the word of this bidding, let those three turn to the choir and say, *Alleluia! resurrexit Dominus!* This said, let the one still sitting there and as if recalling them say the anthem *Venite et videte locum*. And saying this, let him rise, and lift the veil, and show them the place bare of the cross, but only the cloths laid there in which the cross was wrapped. And when they have seen this, let them set down the thuribles which they bare in that same sepulchre, and take the cloth, and hold it up in the face of the clergy, and as if to demonstrate that the Lord is risen and is no longer wrapped therein, let them sing the anthem *Surrexit Dominus de sepulchro*, and lay the cloth upon the altar. When the anthem is done, let the prior, sharing in their gladness at the triumph of our King, in that having vanquished death He rose again, begin the hymn *Te Deum laudamus*, and, this begun, all the bells chime out together.

In this way the church became for the Saxon men and women not only the temple of a God Whom they were slowly learning to know and worship, but also a place where they heard stories of a new and absorbing kind, told sometimes in the words of the priest, sometimes, even more vividly, by means of scenes acted before them. They did not lose their relish for the older kind of story. The strolling gleeman was still gladly received, when he entered a village, and was listened to by delighted crowds. He sang the songs that his forerunners had been used to sing, and he added to them his own tales of the heroic happenings of his day ; but gradually there began to make their way into his story references and ideas drawn from the new religion of the White Christ, each small and unimportant in itself, but showing how the faith taught by the Christian monks had touched not only the hearts of the people, but their imagination also. The Bible story at this time entered into English literature, and it has kept its place there up to our own day.

CHAPTER III

SAXON RUNES AND MANUSCRIPTS

THERE is an old Norse myth which tells how the great god Odin once hung for nine days and nights from the sacred tree Yggdrasil, looking into the unfathomable depths below, where lay Niflheim, the dreadful region of mist and darkness. He had given himself a wound with his spear, believing that through the weakness of his body his mind would gain power, and during all those nine days and nights he set himself with stern intensity to the task of finding some mystic signs that he might use as spells to work his will over the powers of darkness. The signs of which by so much suffering he possessed himself he called runes.

Such is the mythical account of the origin of runes, and if we do not choose to accept it there is no other that can be offered which is equally definite and circumstantial. All that can be said with certainty is that the runes are very old. They certainly go back as far as the third century, and probably a good deal farther. It has been conjectured that the Germanic tribes very early in their history came in contact with the Greeks, and adopted the whole or part of the Greek alphabet, which they developed into the signs known as runes; and this seems likely, though it has not so far been proved. We do not know whether the runes were at first simply magic signs or whether from the beginning they had the significance of letters. At the time of the Saxon invasion of Britain they had been formed into an alphabet, and this alphabet was common to all the Germanic tribes. The Saxons brought it to this country, and it was in use here up to the tenth century. The runic inscriptions that are to be found in different parts of our land may, though only in a very limited sense, be regarded as the first written words of the Englishman's literature.

In the early days the runes were regarded as all-powerful. Odin, when he visited the kingdom of the dead to find out what fate awaited his son Balder, forced the Vala to appear and answer his questions by means of a rune which he traced on the ground. In one of the stories of Saxo Grammaticus we are told how a rune placed under the tongue of a dead man caused him to speak. A strip of wood inscribed with runes and slipped under the pillow of a sick person had power to make him well; sometimes it could even bring the dead to life. One could take deadly vengeance on one's enemy by means of runes, could change storm to sunshine, and mete out victory or defeat in battle.

The word has never lost its associations of awe and mystery.

> Keeping time, time, time,
> In a sort of Runic rhyme,

says Edgar Allan Poe, in his poem *The Bells*; and "Rounded in the ear," says Shakespeare, using a word, derived from runes, which means "to whisper," "to impart a secret." *Raedan* was the word used for the act of interpreting the runes, and its original meaning survives in the expression "to read a riddle."

The twenty-four runic letters were all made up of straight lines and angles—for the reason that it was difficult to make curves when the writing materials were a strip of wood and some sharp cutting instrument. The first six were ᚠ, ᚢ, ᚦ, ᚩ, ᚱ, ᚳ (F, U, TH, O, R, C), and from them the alphabet is known as the "Futhorc." *Boc* was the name for the strip of beech-wood on which the runes were written, and it gives us our word 'book'; our verb 'to write' comes from *writan*, which signifies the cutting of the rune on wood or stone.

The Saxons often placed a runic inscription on their weapons or on any other object to which they wished to give magic power. A sword, found in the Thames, and now in the British Museum, is inscribed with all the letters of the alphabet as well as the name of its owner—Beagnoþ. When England became Christian this practice of runic inscription was continued in the form of a Christian charm

or prayer. At Whitby, among other refuse in the kitchen-midden of the old monastic house, a comb was found bearing the runes, "God bless us, God Almighty help our house," the prayer of the cloister folk. Its date is probably between 600 and 650.

Gradually the belief in the magic power of the runes weakened, and they were used for the ordinary purposes of writing. An old Saxon poem called *The Husband's Message* tells of a man who has been driven from his own country sending a message to his wife, and the message is cut in runic characters on a piece of wood. In the story by Saxo Grammaticus on which Shakespeare founded his play of *Hamlet* the secret message sent by the King took a similar form.

Inscriptions on various monuments show that runes were in use in England up to the tenth century; but long before that time they had been displaced as a means of ordinary writing by the Roman alphabet, which the Christian monks had brought with them. Augustine set up a school of writing in the South, but for some reason we do not know this was not successful. It seems soon to have been superseded altogether by the flourishing schools which missionaries from Ireland had established in Northumbria.

The Saxons adopted the Roman alphabet, retaining from the Futhorc only certain letters which stood for sounds peculiar to the English language—for example, the letter þ called "thorn," which stood for our modern *th* (as in 'thorn').

The Irish had learnt the art of writing from Romish monks, but they had far outstripped their teachers, and their clear, beautiful style, with its round, black, finely formed letters, was famous. In Northumbria the new art was eagerly taken up. As Christianity spread and monasteries were established many monks devoted themselves to the work, and a characteristic national style was evolved—as clear and regular as the Irish, but more flowing and graceful in line. The monasteries of Whitby, Wearmouth, Jarrow, and Streonesalh each had a company of scribes at work making copies of the Latin Scriptures and the writings of the Fathers

of the Church, which had been brought to England from Rome. A copy of the Gospels, in Latin, written by Eadfrith, Bishop of Lindisfarne, about the year 700 is a very fine example of the Northumbrian school. It is known as the Durham Book, and is now in the British Museum.

To the great mass of the people this gift of the alphabet which the monks had brought seemed a small and unimportant thing—just a new species of magic that the priests of the White Christ could use in their struggle against the older gods with their wonder-working runes. But there were some who saw its real value more clearly. There was a large body of true and earnest believers in the new faith, and these were eager to learn the monkish art that they might read for themselves the Word of the God they worshipped. There was another and a larger class, made up chiefly of young and well-born Saxons, who were aspiring and restless, not satisfied with their present life of fighting, hunting, and feasting, and eager for something better if they could find it. As the news of what was going on in the monasteries slowly spread through the country round these lads received it eagerly. Here was promise of new eyes and new ears, of a world marvellously and gloriously enlarged. No wonder there was a rush of scholars to the monasteries.

From all parts of Northumbria came eager men and youths—fair-haired Saxon boys, whose fathers had, for many generations now, been settled on the wide Northumbrian farmsteads, with a sprinkling of Celts, smaller and darker, descendants of the displaced Britons. These had caught fire from the words of some travelling preacher, so that nothing would do but that they must away to the homes of the new faith and the new learning. They were gladly received by the missionary monks, from whom " there daily flowed rivers of knowledge to water the hearts of their hearers ; and together with the books of Holy Writ they also taught them the arts of ecclesiastical poetry, astronomy, and arithmetic." Most of the monasteries possessed a good collection of manuscripts brought from Rome, and of these manuscripts the scribes set to work to make copies. By a

Illuminated Page from the Lindisfarne Gospels

Circa A.D. 700.

British Museum

system of exchange between one monastery and another the collections were enlarged. Benedict, Abbot of Wearmouth, possessed, we are told, " a large and noble library," which under his successor, Ceolfrid, was doubled in extent.

The monastery in which the most important work was done, both in teaching and in writing, was Jarrow, where lived the famous scholar and teacher, Bede. There were six hundred scholars at Jarrow, drawn from many parts of the kingdom, and work went on very happily there under the guidance of the kindly teacher, who, for all his learning and piety, had a gay good-humour and a fine simplicity of character that won the boys' hearts. Many were occupied in copying Bede's own works, especially the famous *Ecclesiastical History of the English People* and the Anglo-Saxon translation of the Gospel of St John. In the University Library of Cambridge there is now a beautifully written copy of the *Ecclesiastical History* which is probably the work of one of Bede's scholars.

The strip of wood was still used for writing, but now it was covered with a thin coating of wax, upon which letters were scratched with a sharp piece of bone or metal, later called a poyntel. This seems to have been used only for notes and memoranda, or for making rough outlines of passages to be copied out later. The real writing material was vellum, the prepared skin of the calf. It was an ideal substance for writing on—soft and pliant, and non-absorbent, so that the letters stood out clearly. Its drawback was that it was scarce and costly, so that the poorer monasteries found it hard to get enough for their requirements.

At first the monks did not attempt to ornament their manuscripts, but later they began to make large and elaborate initial letters, which they coloured or gilded, and to illustrate their text by roughly executed drawings in the margins. The best manuscripts took many months in the making, and were very costly. It is said that King Alfred once gave an entire estate as payment for one of these manuscripts.

Nearly all the manuscripts in the monastic libraries of this period were in Latin, but most monasteries possessed at least one copy of the famous Saxon poem by Cædmon,

the cowherd of Whitby. The monks soon became familiar with it, and " by his verses," Bede tells us, " the minds of many were often excited to despise the world and to aspire to heaven." Outside the monasteries, however, there were few readers, and Cædmon's poem was almost unknown.

Before the end of the eighth century the glory of Northumbria had passed. It had been attacked and overrun by the heathen state of Mercia, its scholars scattered, its manuscripts destroyed, its learning stamped out, its high achievement and higher aspiration thrown down. Then succeeded nearly a hundred years of fighting and disorder all over the country. The Danes were invading the land, and men had little mind for learning or for songs, except the old fierce songs of battle and bloodshed.

When Alfred came to the throne in 871 he found learning and interest in learning almost gone. He toiled hard in the scant leisure the Danes gave him for peaceful pursuits to revive both ; and before the end of his reign something like the old state of things had come back. Monks were working industriously in all parts of the country, but especially in the South, at the making of books. Many were occupied in copying simple reading-books in the Saxon language for the schools which Alfred had established, and in which he had decreed that every free-born youth should " abide by his book until he could well understand English writing." Alfred himself had learned to read in his boyhood from a book of Saxon poetry which his mother had offered as a prize to that one of her sons who could first read in it, but none of his brothers could read or write. Alfred loved the old Saxon songs and encouraged the minstrels to sing them and the boys in his schools to learn them by heart. That the wandering gleeman still roamed the country and was gladly welcomed by the people is witnessed to by the story which is told of Alfred himself going into the Danish camp disguised as a minstrel in order to learn something of the enemy's movements.

The manuscripts produced in the monasteries were still written in Latin, for Latin remained for many years the common language of scholars throughout the world ; and

in spite of Alfred's efforts there were very few people outside the monasteries who could read or write their own native Saxon. During the tenth and the early part of the eleventh centuries some of the poems which had been handed on from the earliest times were written down. The copy of *Beowulf* now in the British Museum was probably made by a monk of a monastery in the South; and the *Mycel Englisc Boc*, a collection of Saxon poetry presented to Exeter Cathedral in 1071 by Leofric, Bishop of Devon and Cornwall, dates from about the same time. But these were in no sense books of the people, though they contained songs which the people knew well. The Saxon literature is almost entirely a monastic literature, and only through the scholars whom the monasteries attracted did it come into some slight relation with the people.

CHAPTER IV

THE NORMAN MINSTREL

THE battle of Hastings had been fought and lost; and the Saxon people henceforward must live under the rule of a conqueror. The younger nobles who had admired and imitated the Normans at the Court of Edward the Confessor perhaps welcomed the change; others who hated the Norman William smiled from policy; many were in open rebellion. But the mass of the people, with wrath and hatred in their hearts, lived in sullen, unwilling submission.

The Saxon gleeman, trudging from village to village, found discontent everywhere. An alien master owned the farmsteads of the freemen and the huts of the thralls; and freeman and thrall must help him build his grand new castle because the hall which had been the home of the Saxon eorl was not good enough for the Norman noble. New laws and new customs were being forced upon the people; the new master and his followers spoke a new language, and scorned the honest Saxon of the men born on the soil. Following the first conquerors came swarms of other Normans, drawn by tales of how men could grow rich quickly in England—merchants and artificers, clerks and workmen, minstrels and players; and each one who came was, in his degree, an oppressor.

The gleeman found his countrymen in no mood now to listen to his far-off stories of old legendary heroes; but when, braving punishment, he sang of their lost king Harold, or of those who at that very time were, against great odds, defying the Conqueror—of Waltheof at York and Hereward in the Isle of Ely—they crowded to hear him. So the gleeman took on something of a political character, and voiced the grievances and discontent of the people. His long narratives were changed for short songs,

or sometimes for dialogues in which two sides of a question were argued with great vigour. He became to his audiences on the village green and at the cross-roads not only an entertainer, but a news-bringer and a partisan.

But at the King's Court and in the castles of the nobles songs very different from those of the gleemen were heard. A joyous, splendid crowd of knights and ladies thronged round the Norman minstrel as he sang his triumphant songs of victory. He sang of the overthrow of Harold and of the valour of the conquering William and of many brave deeds done on the field of Hastings; and the lay that gained him the loudest applause from that proud audience was the lay of Taillefer. It told how William's favourite minstrel led the Norman hosts to the onslaught; how he put spurs to his horse and dashed toward the lines of the enemy; how in sheer light-heartedness and joy of battle he threw his sword in the air and caught it by its point,

> Chanting loud the lusty strain,
> Of Roland and of Charlemain,
> And the dead, who, deathless all,
> Fell at famous Roncesval;

how Saxon after Saxon fell before his mighty blows, until, still singing, he was borne down by numbers, and died.

It was thus that the *Chanson de Roland*, the great national epic of the Normans, was first chanted in England by a Norman minstrel; and thus did Taillefer lead, not only the battle-hosts, but also the crowd of minstrels who, in the years after Hastings, crossed the narrow seas and settled in our land. There were minstrels of every class and degree, from the proud, exclusive company of the troubadours, which included in later times our own Richard I and René, father of Margaret of Anjou, down to the jongleurs, who ranked with the Saxon gleemen.

Minstrels of the highest class travelled in great state, wearing armour as befitted their rank as knights. Each was attended by several minstrels of lower standing, who acted as his heralds and assistants. These rode before their master and gave notice of his coming:

> We come, bringing a precious balsam which cures all sorts of ills, and heals the troubles both of body and mind. It is contained in a vase of gold adorned with jewels the most rare. Even to see it is wonderful pleasure, as you will find if you care to try. The balsam is the music of our master, the gold is our courtly company. Would you have the vase open, and disclose its ineffable treasure ?

This announcement was always received with enthusiasm, for the winter evenings often seemed long and empty to the dwellers in those great baronial castles. With courteous ceremony the minstrel was brought in, and a richly adorned robe thrown over his armour. At the evening banquet in the great hall he had the place of honour, and afterward, when his servants had tried their lesser arts to please the company, he began his lay.

Lords and ladies sat in the seats of honour, squires and pages, maidens-in-waiting, perhaps also the seneschal, the steward, and some of the domestic servants, thronged the back of the hall to listen to the long-drawn-out recital. The lay was usually in rhyming couplets, and was chanted in a monotonous sing-song. Before it was half over the pages and grooms had probably slipped away to sport of their own in the remoter parts of the castle, and with them had gone some of the lesser minstrels to delight them with a display of dancing, tumbling, and juggling. But the lords and ladies sat on hour after hour, without weariness or loss of interest.

The songs to which they listened were very different from those which had roused the enthusiasm of the warriors in the Saxon mead-hall. The Norman minstrel sang of love ; and though he sang of fighting too, and deeds of valour, these also were in the cause of love. Nor was the fighting any longer the rough, primitive, almost savage fighting of earlier days, but the knightly warfare of chivalry. *Beowulf* would have found little favour with an Anglo-Norman audience! Its language, of course, would have been quite unintelligible to most of them ; but even in a French translation they would have called it rough and uncouth, lacking in the grace and beauty of true poetry, lacking,

above all, in the fervent expression of devotion to ladies which they most delighted to hear. *Beowulf* had no heroine ; but in the romances, as the lays of the Norman minstrels were called, the heroine was as important and indispensable as the hero.

In their main outlines the stories showed little variety. There was a gallant hero who always turned out to be a high-born knight, although often he was first introduced in a lowly guise, and a lovely heroine, who, in the same way, was certain to prove a lady of high degree, if not a princess. There was a rival who was a monster of falsehood and wickedness ; there were hard-hearted parents and devoted servants, faithful friends and treacherous enemies. The hero and heroine remained constant to each other through incredible trials, and the knight performed marvellous deeds of valour. At last he overthrew his rival and won his bride, and they lived happily ever after ; or, less often, the enemy was triumphant and the knight and his lady died together. This simple plot was varied by the introduction of many picturesque details and innumerable episodes. The knight in the course of his adventures often travelled to strange and distant lands and fought with heathens, Turks, and Paynims. The language of the romances was courtly and high-flown, and long, elaborate speeches and disquisitions on the usages of chivalry were put into the mouths of the characters, and gave great delight to an audience whose chief interest lay in matters such as these.

It is probable that at an early stage many of the romances were written down, and passed from one minstrel to another. The collection of every minstrel most likely included the cycles dealing with King Arthur, Charlemagne, and Alexander the Great, besides many others founded on the legends of Europe and of the Eastern world.

As time went on, and others besides the monks learned to read and write, copies of the romances were multiplied. All boys of good birth received some instruction in reading and writing as part of their knightly training, and it was one of the duties of the page to read aloud to the company in the hall or in the ladies' bower. It is probable that

Geoffrey Chaucer, when in his youth he served as a page in the household of the Duchess of Clarence, was often called upon to read one of these interminable stories, and we can imagine how bored he would be when the author was unusually long-winded and the speeches especially intricate. For by Chaucer's time—the second half of the fourteenth century—the Anglo-Norman romance had reached its highest point and was rapidly declining. The younger knights and squires were beginning to find the long-drawn-out stories intolerably dull, and the minstrel, when he sang them in the hall after supper, found his audience small, and not very attentive. He took himself and his songs to the ladies' bower, but even here, though he ornamented and refined them to suit the taste of this more select audience, the interest in them soon grew languid. They lingered on long after all life and vigour had departed from them, but after the end of the fourteenth century they counted for very little in the national literature.

Meanwhile, another class of minstrel had risen to popularity—a class less literary, less exclusive, but appealing to a far wider audience. At a very early stage the inferior minstrels, or jongleurs, had separated themselves from their masters. They had taken their harps in their hands and gone out boldly to join the Saxon gleeman on the road. A century after the Conquest the fusion of Saxon and Norman had gone far enough for both the Saxon and the Norman minstrel to make himself intelligible to the mixed audiences that crowded to hear him ; and if he were hard put to it he could always eke out a scanty knowledge of his hearers' language with dramatic gesture and action.

In the streets of the city, on the village green, in wayside inns, in the homes of merchants and artisans, in the servants' quarters of the castle, or even, usurping the place of their betters, in the castle hall, these minstrels played their parts. Every public merrymaking, every tournament, or wedding, or betrothal, or christening, saw troops of minstrels crowding in. At the marriage of Queen Eleanor's daughter Joan to the Earl of Gloucester in May 1290 the roll of payments shows that four hundred and twenty-six minstrels were

Holde he ȝ̊ þ̊ fnaunt was mayden mayre
And lyr his lone flowre and fynyfie

¶ Al þogh his lyfe be queynt þe refemblaunce
Of hym hap in me ȝo frefh lyfhyneffe
þat to þyne othir men in remembraunce
Of his þfone ȝ haue heere his lykneffe
Do make to ys ende in ȝothfaftneffe
þat yei þ̊ haue of hym left yought ȝ mynde
By his peynture may vpeyn hym fynde

¶ The ymages þ̊ in ȝ̊ chirche been
Vnaken folk penke on god & on his feyntes
Whan þe ymages yei be holden ȝ feen
Were oft enfyte of hem enfith reftreyntes
Of youghtes gode Whan a ymg depeynt is
Or curtales if men take of it heede
Thoght of þe lykneffe it wil in hym breede

¶ Yit some holden oppynyon and ley
þat none ymages fchuld ȝ make be
yei erren foule ȝ goon out of þe wey
Of trouth haue yei ftraut fenfibilite
Paffe oth þ̊ noth blyffid remyte
Vppon my mayftres foule indy haue
ffor hym lasy eke ȝ̊ indy ȝ crave

¶ Myore othir ymg Wolde ȝ fryne fpeke & touche
Heere in his booke but ochuch is my dulneffe
ffor þ̊ al voyde and empty is my pouche
þat al my luft is queynt þ̊ heupneffe
And heuy fprite comaundeth ftilneffe

PORTRAIT OF CHAUCER

From Thomas Occleve's poem *De Regimine Principum.* This is believed to be the only authentic portrait of Chaucer.

British Museum

present, and that £100 (with purchasing power of about £1500 of our present money) was distributed among them. In 1306 at the Whitsuntide feast of Edward I there were even more, and £200 was distributed. Sometimes the minstrels travelled beyond the seas in the train of a king or of a great noble. We are told that when Thomas à Becket, about 1159, went to Paris to arrange a marriage between Henry II's eldest son and the daughter of Louis VII he entered the French town " preceded by two hundred and fifty boys on foot, in groups of six, ten, or more together, singing English songs according to the custom of their country."

On occasions such as these the minstrels gained great rewards ; not only money, but rich robes, jewels, and even grants of land were given to those whose lays had won high favour. But these were the leaders of the bands—the minstrel-kings, as they were called. The rank and file had to be content with a humble share of the largesse, or when no grand festival was toward with the small coins that could be gathered from wayside audiences.

It was a free, roving life, and it had its gay, triumphant hours. The minstrel was a well-known figure in the countryside, and was sure of his welcome wherever he went. You could tell him afar off by his bright, many-coloured raiment, and when a minstrel and his attendants were seen approaching a village word soon went round and men, women, and children crowded out to meet them. On came the merry company, with quip and jest, dancing, leaping, singing. The peacock's feather that stood upright in each cap nodded and waved as the wearer leaped and twisted in his mirthful antics. The ribbon streamers that adorned their bright-hued jackets ringed their dancing forms with a swirl of colour. There was a little preliminary joking and laughing, perhaps a merry tune on the veille—a small stringed instrument which each minstrel carried—and then the story began.

It was not one of the romances of chivalry. This audience —yeomen, carters, ploughmen, swineherds, grooms and serving-men, cottage housewives, dairymaids, kitchen wenches, boys and girls—would not have listened with

interest, or even with patience, to the lays that had delighted the lords and ladies at the castle. The minstrel must suit his story to his hearers. Most of the romances in his store were written in English ; the Norman minstrel, if he sometimes stumbled, could make up for the deficiencies of his tongue by his expressive gestures and the play of his mobile, close-shaven face. They were shorter, too, quicker in movement, simpler in language and style ; with an abundance of homely detail and an abundance of hard knocks and hand-to-hand fighting such as the Saxons loved. Only the outline of the story was much the same, and the moment when the brave knight and his fair lady were in the most desperate straits and the villain was almost triumphant was, we may be sure, the moment when the wily minstrel paused in his story and collected the offerings of his audience. If there were some who could not give even the small coin which was all that he expected they could, perhaps, make an offering in kind—a piece of cheese or butter or bacon, a hunch of bread, a few vegetables—all went into the wallet which the minstrel wore upon his back and made a dinner to be eaten next day under a hedge or in the shelter of a barn.

When the story was finished the jongleur had by no means come to the end of his programme. Says one of them :

> I can play the lute, the violin, the pipe, the bagpipe, the gigue, the gittern, the symphony, the organistrum, the regals, the tabor, and the rote. I can sing a song well and make tales and fables. I can tell a story against any man. I can make love verses to please young ladies and can play the gallant for them if necessary. Then I can throw knives into the air and catch them without cutting my fingers. I can balance chairs, and make tables dance. I can throw a somersault and walk on my head.

Then, after the performance on the green was ended, away to the village inn to earn a supper and a shakedown of straw in the barn by telling more stories to the villagers who came for their evening mug of ale :

> Thomas the tinker and two of his knaves,
> Hick the hakeney man [1] and Hugh the needle-seller,
> Claryce of Cockes lane, the clerke of the church.

[1] One who lets out horses for hire.

ACROBATIC DANCING

This represents members of just such a troupe as that described on pp. 33 and 34. These men could sing and dance, do acrobatic tricks, and play various instruments.

Royal MSS., British Museum

Or, if the lord of the manor were of a temper not too haughty or exclusive, there might be a performance in the great hall there, before a crowd of ladies and gentlemen and serving-men and maids. Next day, perhaps to a fair, where the merrymakers flocked to the story-telling as to the choicest of the day's pleasures. Here might be heard news of a wedding on the morrow at the house of a man of means some dozen miles away; then the minstrel would be busy far into the night, furbishing his gaudy attire and going over his store of songs and stories to decide which would be most acceptable. A few hours' sleep, then a start at daybreak and a long trudge toward the scene of the festivity, falling in on the way with other minstrels bound for the same place. Some of these were jongleurs like himself; others were wandering scholars who through idleness or drunkenness or dislike of routine and confinement had left or been turned out of their universities and had taken to the road. Witty fellows these, out-at-elbows but light-hearted, who gathered up the scandals of the times and made them into scurrilous ballads, who burlesqued the doings of the Court and even of the Church until their hearers shouted with laughter.

At the wedding the minstrels would gather a rich harvest; but they would spend most of it in a great carouse that night and wake next morning to the old round of singing and gathering in pence—this time, perhaps, in busy city streets, where the people came streaming out of their close-packed houses, and where noisy apprentices and street-idlers called for all the minstrel's skill and good temper to keep them interested and in peaceful humour.

In summer, when the skies were fair, the minstrel's life held strong charms for a young and careless and adventurous spirit. But when the rain came, and even the high roads were impassable for travellers, and the country lanes were quagmires; when a heavy fall of snow made it impossible to reach the next village, and the night must needs be spent cowering and shivering under a hedge; when youth was gone and rheumatic pains racked the body that had been so lithe and agile—then the minstrel might well wish that

he had chosen to become a swineherd or a serving-man, or anything that would have given him a settled home, even the poorest, where he might rest secure and dry. And, though the minstrel had many friends, he had also powerful enemies. The Church hated him, and the State looked upon him with suspicion as little better than a sturdy beggar.

Some minstrels sought security by attaching themselves to a powerful master who was able to protect them. The King had a large body of minstrels in his service, and so had many of the great nobles. The corporations of towns employed companies of minstrels, whose duty it was to assist in public festivals and ceremonies. But these soon lost their old character, and had little in common with the real wandering minstrel; they gained the safety they sought, but they were no longer of the brotherhood.

Year by year the ranks of that brotherhood grew thinner and in more desperate case. While the people held to them and there was a general demand for their stories they need pay little heed to Papal decrees and Parliamentary statutes. It was only when their popularity waned—as it did wane, gradually in the thirteenth century, more quickly in the fourteenth—that the ultimate disappearance of the wandering minstrel became a thing assured.

It did not come until after the close of the fifteenth century, but progress toward it was rapid and uninterrupted. The people had outgrown his stories and his methods. Town life was rapidly developing, and the new conditions were not favourable to the practice of the story-teller's art. A knowledge of reading was becoming more common, and the introduction of printing made it possible for every fairly prosperous household to possess a few books. Most potent reason of all, the drama was gaining a hold upon the people; they were finding in it just the form of expression that satisfied their intellectual needs. The minstrel must make way for the playwright and the actor.

CHAPTER V

THE MIRACLE PLAY

THE Norman Conquest brought little change to the Church in England, as the ordinary Saxon saw it. The new rulers—the Norman bishops and archbishops—did much in reorganizing the monasteries, in building noble churches and cathedrals, in introducing learning and culture from the Continent, and in making the Church a greater power in the land than it had ever been before. But in his own old village church, or in one of the stately and beautiful buildings that the Normans had raised to the glory of God, the Saxon was conscious of no such rough break as had come to him in his everyday life. He heard the same familiar words chanted, listened to the same stories, saw the same solemn and elaborate ritual; and the Latin tongue, which had seemed so strange to his forefathers, had for him a homelike, friendly sound in comparison with the language of the conquerors that he heard all about him.

There were probably more services now, and larger congregations, for the Normans as a nation were more devout than the Saxons; and there was far greater strictness in the keeping of fasts and festivals. But of these things the Saxon took little heed. He came to church Sunday by Sunday as he had been used to do. He saw the stories with which he had long been familiar take on a clearer form and add incident to incident; he saw new stories unfold themselves, bringing to life new characters; and in the cycle of the Church's year he travelled through a familiar and friendly country which yet was not quite the same as when he last passed that way.

Sometimes the changes were small and unimportant; sometimes they were such as drew his eager interest. On a certain Easter morning, for example, in a year so far from the Conquest that he had begun to regard his Norman

neighbours with tolerance, if not with friendliness, the Saxon saw, as he had done for many years, the scene enacted in which the holy women come to the empty sepulchre and are told by an angel that Christ is risen. But instead of this being followed by the *Te Deum* in the usual way there was presented before the interested and curious congregation of Saxons and Normans another scene, in which the two disciples Peter and John were shown coming in haste to the sepulchre. Two priests, representing the disciples, met the holy women, and by gesture and singing were told what had happened. They entered the sepulchre and, coming out, displayed the linen cloth before the congregation.

A few years later yet another scene was added, in which Mary Magdalen stayed behind the others and met the risen Christ, Whom she supposed to be the gardener. And so the dramas grew, and by drawing in incident after incident recorded in the Gospels were made to illustrate more and more fully the different seasons of the Church's year.

Then there came an Eastertide when the congregation looked with delight upon a little scene which was not founded upon the Gospel story, but had its origin in the imagination of some priest or monk with an eye to dramatic effect. The three Marys were shown buying from a spice-merchant, on their way to the sepulchre, the spices they required. At first the spice-merchant played his part without words, but at later representations speeches were given to him. He bargained with the women and tried to cheat them; and ultimately he developed into a comic character, and was received with hearty laughter as soon as he made his appearance.

We are not sure whether the spectators knew that this incident was not to be found in the Bible story, but no consideration of its source would have interfered with their enjoyment. Their feeling of reverence for holy things was not offended at the idea of jesting and laughter so near the tomb of the crucified Christ. They were not shocked at a little coarseness. Since the Conquest the Saxons had developed a sense of humour. It was primitive, for the

CHRIST HARROWING HELL

This was a favourite subject of mystery plays. The porter of hell, holding an instrument of torture in his hands, is blowing a blast on a trumpet and crying out to arouse the fiendish hosts.

From an early engraving, after a still earlier manuscript of the Chester mystery plays

humour of the Normans themselves was still broad and elementary. Yet there it was, alive and growing, fed by the jests and witty stories of the wandering minstrels. The new scene, therefore, was thoroughly to the taste of both the Saxon and the Norman members of the congregation.

Up to this point the play, though it had a certain completeness in itself, was definitely part of the service of the Church. It came in the middle of Matins. It was followed by the singing of the *Te Deum*; the whole of the dialogue was in Latin, and was chanted, not spoken; and hymns and psalms were introduced at various points. There were very few of what might be termed stage properties, and these were symbolical. St Peter carried the keys, and ears of corn were worn by the players to suggest the Resurrection.

New plays, as they were evolved, followed the same course, and were made an actual part of one of the Church services. In some towns—in Lichfield certainly, as we know from the Lichfield statutes—a play called the *Peregrini* was acted at the evening service on Easter Monday. It showed the two disciples going to Emmaus, their meeting with the risen Christ, and the supper at the journey's end; later another scene was added showing the appearance of Christ to the disciples and then to the doubting Thomas. On Holy Innocents' Day there arose at some time during the twelfth century a custom of representing the grief of the bereaved mothers by means of a lament sung by one chorister and a consoling reply sung by another in the character of an angel. At Matins on Epiphany Sunday came the play known as *Tres Reges*, or *Stella*, in which a great shining star was hung at the east end of the church, toward which came three priests bearing gifts.

This play of *Tres Reges* showed, later, an interesting development. It was extended to include, as an opening scene, the visit of the three kings to Herod and, as a closing scene, his wrath when they failed to return. In one of the versions of this closing scene the stage direction says, "The play ends with Herod taking a sword from a bystander and brandishing it in the air." This piece of stage play seems to have been received with favour by the audience, for the

hint thus given was developed in the later plays until Herod became the raging, shouting, laughter-moving character that he appears in the fully developed miracle play.

All these plays were founded on the Gospel narrative, and we may reasonably suppose that the clergy, finding them so successful, looked round for an opportunity of using the same method in the teaching of other parts of the Scriptures. There was the Old Testament, full of splendid dramatic stories; there were the journeyings of the Apostles; there was the great pageant of the Revelation of St John. In these were plays ready to hand. They must be used for the instruction and edification of the people.

The impulse which prompted the first step toward the accomplishment of this came from a sermon said to have been preached by St Augustine. It was very well known and popular throughout the Middle Ages, and was highly esteemed by the Church. A passage from it was commonly read during the Christmas season, and on one of these occasions its dramatic possibilities fired the imagination of some zealous ecclesiastic. In this passage the preacher called on various inspired speakers whose words are recorded in the Old or the New Testament—Isaiah, Jeremiah, Daniel, Moses, David, Habakkuk, Simeon, Zacharias, Elizabeth, John the Baptist—to bear witness that Christ was indeed the Son of God. It was easy to convert such a passage into a dialogue and to extend it almost indefinitely by adding fresh characters and fresh speeches. Gradually little plays began to form round each character; for example, Balaam suggested the scene with the ass, Daniel the casting of the three Israelites into the fiery furnace.

In this way the congregations grew familiar with the idea that not only one or two incidents bearing upon a special doctrine, but an entire Scripture narrative, might be presented in a dramatic form. Thenceforward the number of plays increased rapidly, and soon the lives of the saints were also drawn upon to provide material.

The next step came quite naturally. The plays, having gained length and completeness, were dissociated from the services of which they had formed part, and acted simply as

plays. Then the obvious advantage of joining two or more plays in a natural sequence was quickly recognized; and in this way a set of scenes was formed of sufficient length and coherence to make an attractive performance. When this was done, however inadequately, the miracle play came into being.

This stage was reached about the middle of the thirteenth century. By that time the fusion of Saxon and Norman had gone so far as to produce what was, for everyday purposes, a single race. It was this race, which we may call the English, that carried the play on to its ultimate development.

The play was made, and was severed from the actual services of the Church; but it was still acted within the church building, the actors were the clergy, the language was the ecclesiastical language of Latin, the performance was arranged and controlled by the Church authorities. All these things must be altered if the miracle play was to become, as seemed inevitable, an institution of the people.

Side by side with steady development along the lines on which it had already been travelling these changes were accomplished. Soon the length of the play, the number of actors engaged, and the accessories required made it impossible for performances to take place in the church, even when the whole of the nave was utilized and the spectators crowded into the side aisles. The scene was therefore changed to the churchyard, or sometimes even to an open place near by. Next it became necessary to admit secular persons to take some of the many parts, and when this came about it was almost impossible to keep up the use of Latin. First one part and then another was given in the vernacular, until at last Latin entirely disappeared.

A part of the manuscript of a very interesting play called *Adam* has come down to us, and the stage directions to this help us to form some idea of the manner in which the plays were set before the audiences of the time. It is of Norman-French origin, and belongs either to the twelfth or the thirteenth century. The main part of the dialogue is in

Norman-French; the prophecies are given in Latin and then in Norman-French.

The opening stage direction says:

> A Paradise is to be made in a raised spot, with curtains and cloths of silk hung round it at such a height that the persons in the Paradise may be visible from the shoulders upwards. Fragrant flowers and leaves are to be set round about, and divers trees put therein with hanging fruit, so as to give the likeness of a most delicate spot.

Later on in the play comes:

> Adam and Eve walk about Paradise in honest delight. Meanwhile, the demons are to run about the stage with suitable gestures, approaching the Paradise from time to time and pointing out the forbidden fruit to Eve as though persuading her to eat it.

And again, at the end of the play:

> Then shall come the devil and three or four devils with him, carrying in their hands chains and iron fetters which they shall put upon the necks of Adam and Eve. And some shall push, and others pull them to hell; and hard by hell shall be other devils ready to meet them, who shall hold high revel at their fall. And certain other devils shall point them out as they come, and shall snatch them up and carry them into hell; and there shall they make a great smoke arise, and call aloud to each other with glee in their hell, and clash their pots and kettles that they may be heard without. And after a little delay the devils shall come out and run about the stage. But some shall remain in hell.

In 1264 Pope Urban IV instituted the festival of Corpus Christi, to be held on the Thursday after Trinity Sunday in honour of the body of Christ as transformed at the celebration of the Eucharist. On this day it was the custom of the craft and trade guilds in most of the important towns to walk in procession through the streets, and gradually there grew up a custom that in the course of the procession, each different group or craft should present a little play founded on some incident in the Scriptures. The towns by this time had grown rich and powerful, and were eager for opportunities of display; the love of dramatic representation fostered by the dialogues and acting of the minstrels

and the sacred plays of the Church had become very strong. It is not surprising, therefore, to find these little processional performances developing into a regular series of plays, after the pattern of those that have been described. They were under the management of the corporation of the town, and great pains were taken to make them interesting and attractive. Soon they became so popular that the rival plays of the Church languished and died out. The miracle play had passed entirely into secular hands.

By the end of the fourteenth century this severance from the Church was complete. From this time forward there seem to have been performances of miracle plays in almost every town of any note in England. These were not confined to Corpus Christi Day, though the fullest and most important performances were usually held then. Chester, for some reason that we do not know, held its great performance in Whitsun week.

During the fifteenth century the plays grew more and more popular and were set forward with greater and greater elaboration. At the Reformation efforts were made to suppress them, but the people, especially in the North of England, held to them stubbornly. It was not until the secular drama had reached an advanced stage that the miracle play began to lose its hold on the people; and then, before this powerful rival it fell.

It lingered on through the sixteenth century, and even, in some towns, into the seventeenth. But its glory had departed, and while the century was still young it disappeared.

CHAPTER VI

A MIRACLE PLAY AT CHESTER, 1455

CHESTER was, even in the fifteenth century, an ancient city. A thousand years had passed since the Romans had built a strong wall round it to serve as its defence against the Welsh across the border; and for a thousand years the two great roads running through it had been highways for those who came on peaceful missions of friendship or of trade. These two roads, which the Romans had hewn out of the solid rock, crossed one another at right angles—as they still do to-day. Their intersection was marked by a large open space where the High Cross of the city was set up. The cross has disappeared, but still the name remains, and the men of Chester call this central point of their city "The Cross."

Like other medieval towns, Chester had in the fifteenth century lately attained to a new and vigorous corporate life. It had learned how to maintain order within its walls and how to keep its bounds free from intruders; how to organize its many thriving industries; and how to amuse itself. In all these activities it worked largely through its guilds, and these did not think it beneath their dignity to undertake, in addition to their more serious duties, the management of the city shows and processions; and it was the guilds who organized the famous miracle plays which were performed at Whitsuntide.

This performance was for the citizens the great event of the year, greater even than the October fair. The town records which remain show us how carefully the guilds made their preparations and how conscientiously they went into all the details of arrangement. Each guild had its appointed share in the work that was going forward; for example, to "the good, simple water-leaders and drawers

of Dee " was given the superintendence of the Deluge and the Ark, while the Drapers, a wealthy guild, undertook " to set out worthily the Creation of the World." There were many properties to be examined, and possibly renewed. We read in one of the old lists of properties of " an angel that flapped his wings and turned every way," which cost twenty-two pence; of a painted cloth, one half white, the other black, which, we learn, was to be used in the play of the Creation to illustrate the separation of light from darkness. These come among a whole collection of miscellaneous articles, such as horns, tail, and a fiery red beard for the devil, a bladder and a stick for the boy who attended on Herod, swords, gold foil, and pack-thread. There were a large number of actors to be engaged, who received from fourteen pence to four shillings each. The list of other assistants is also a long one. " Paid to Fauston for cock-crowing, iii*d.*," " Paid for mending hell, iii*d.*," " Paid for setting the world on fire, iv*d.*," " Paid for hanging Judas, iii*d.*," " For mending of Dame Procula's [the wife of Pilate] garments, vii*d.*," " To reward to Mistress Grimbsy for lending of her gear for Pilate's wife, xii*d.*"—such are some of the items set down. Each performance seems to have cost about £15, which was paid by means of a yearly rate varying from a penny to fourpence, levied on members of the guild. This money, called " pageant Silver," was placed in the hands of a paymaster, and he was called upon to render a strict account of all that he spent.

We will imagine that some contemporary of our own, moved by an intense desire to behold with his own eyes this characteristic feature of an earlier age, has been enabled to transport himself to the grey old town of Chester on the morning of Whit Monday, 1455, and to move invisible through its streets. Day is but just dawning, yet everybody is astir, for the performance begins soon after four o'clock, and there is early Mass at the Abbey Church of St Werburg (now the Cathedral) to be attended by the devout before that time. Moreover, the excitement that stirs in old and young on that great morning makes sleep

impossible. Out into the streets, on which the fragrance of a fresh early summer morning rests, they come. The invisible shape watches the crowd from the Abbey Church as it meets a stream of less devout or less active citizens who are making their way from the remote streets and lanes to the open spaces of the city. It meets also the stream of "foreigners" which is pouring in from outside the city bounds.

> Monks, palmers, merchants in their various costumes, servants of noble families with badges on their shoulders, hawkers of pardons and relics, pedlars, artificers, grooms, foresters, hinds from the farm and shepherds from the fells; all known by special qualities of dress and bearing, crowd the streets and throng the taverns.

Spectators of higher rank find places at the upper windows of the houses and shops that surround the open spaces, and pay a high price for their accommodation. Queen Margaret of Anjou herself may quite possibly be among these notable guests, for in the records of the city we find it written, "1455. This year Queen Margaret came to Chester"; and at what better time could she come than at Whitsun, to see the famous plays? She went to Coventry, we know, in 1457 to see the miracle plays of that city, and looked at them from a window in the house of Richard Wodes, the grocer, whither the Corporation sent refreshments, including "ij cofyns of counfetys and a pot of grene gynger." With her were the Duke and Duchess of Buckingham, Lord and Lady Rivers, the elder and younger Lady of Shrewsbury, "and other many moo lords and ladyes." So we may reasonably believe that the Queen and her company are at Chester on this fresh spring morning, and that by and by she will be served with an equally elegant repast by the Mayor and Corporation, who will certainly not lag behind their brethren of Coventry. Our modern learns of her presence from chance words heard as he moves unseen through the eager crowd, and cranes his neck that he may see the Queen, of whose

> Valiant courage and undaunted spirit,
> More than in woman commonly is seen,

he has read in his Shakespeare. But with all his efforts he can see only the top of her great horned head-dress.

The old streets are by this time full of light and colour. The Abbey bells sound clear and high above the blithe hum, which, made up of a thousand joyous and eager utterances, was in the fifteenth century, as it is still in the twentieth, the voice of a pleasure-seeking crowd. Our modern hears it, and feels a thrill of comradeship at its familiar note.

In the great open space round the High Cross the crowd is thickest, for it is here that the Mayor sits in his seat of state with the other city dignitaries around him. There is a great deal of pushing and shuffling, for crowds in the fifteenth century were not as well regulated as they are in our own day. The man who has the sturdiest person and the most powerful elbows will probably eventually arrive in the front rank; and he will enjoy his position the more from feeling that it is the reward of a praiseworthy effort. Nor will his vanquished neighbours bear him malice, though they may cast rough jibes at him; their medieval sense of justice allows them to accept without difficulty the dictum that "Might is right." The stranger, who has taken up his place close by the High Cross, congratulates himself on possessing a body which can pass freely through the crowd, its sides unwitting of sharp digs and its feet insensible to the stamps of the holiday shoes of Diccon the butcher and Hal the weaver.

The hum rises suddenly to a sharp, excited note, then drops. A man richly dressed and holding a banner in his hand is coming along the street. This is the well-known signal that the first pageant is at hand. There is a general drawing of deep breaths and settling down to attention. The herald announces the play, telling how it treats of "matter from the Creation of the World to Doomsday" and is the work of "Dom Rondall, Moonke of Chester Abbe," who lived in the thirteenth century. No one except our visitor listens very carefully, for every one is eagerly looking out for the first pageant. Now it rolls in sight. Archdeacon Rogers, who witnessed, in 1594, the last performance of the Chester plays, has told us exactly what

these pageants were like and how they were managed. He says:

> Every company had his pagiant, or parte, which pagiants weare a high scafolde with two rowmes, a higher and a lower, upon four wheeles. In the lower they apparelled themselves, and in the higher rowme they played, being all open on the tope, that all behoulders might heare and see them. The places where they played them was in every streete. They began first at the abay gates, and when the first pagiant was played it was wheeled to the high cross before the mayor, and so to every streete; and so every streete had a pagiant playing before them at one time till all the pagiantes for the day appointed were played; and when one pagiante was neare ended, worde was brought from streete to streete that soe they might come in place thereof, exceeding orderlye, and all the streetes have their pagiantes afore them all at one time playing togeather.

The upper part of the "pagiante" was usually subdivided into three, of which the top formed Paradise, the middle the world, and the lowest, which was often shaped like the mouth of a huge dragon, hell.

The crowd in the street regarded the play with a mixture of feelings which it is difficult for us to understand. In the first place, it was directly connected with their religion, and there were probably few men or women present who did not feel from time to time some fleeting sense of being on holy ground; to the devout the performance had the sanctity of a revelation of the Godhead. The attitude of the Church tended to emphasize the religious importance of the miracle plays. We are told that

> Sir Henry ffrancis, sometyme a Monk of the Monastery of Chester, obtained of Pope Clement a thousand daies of pardon for every person that resorted peaceably to see the same playes, and that every person that disturbed the same be accursed by the said Pope untill such tyme as he shuld be absolved thereof.

In the second place, it was one of the great social functions of the year, a great day to which everybody looked forward as giving an opportunity for the wearing of festal dresses, for seeing and being seen. It was a great annual source of interest and excitement. To the citizen of the fifteenth century it was all that the theatre, the concert, and the cinema are to the citizen of to-day, besides being

a substitute for the novels and stories which every one in our times may read for himself when he pleases. The medieval man was bent upon getting from the play as much entertainment as it was capable of affording; he wanted to be amused, interested, delighted, and he was determined that, in one way or another, he would gain his end.

The first play, "set forth by the Company of Tanners," begins, and it is found that the players have been even better than their word, for this deals with "matter" previous to the Creation—the fall of Lucifer. Satan appears, an object of derision in his feathers all ragged and rent. Next comes the pageant of Creation, with its various quaint devices for illustrating the work of the different days. The "painted cloth" has been previously mentioned. For the creation of the animal kingdom on the fifth day the stage direction reads:

> Then shall be secretly thrown into the air little birds flying, and there shall be set down on the ground geese, swans, ducks, cocks, hens, and other birds, with as many strange beasts as can be found.

The third pageant tells the story of "Noye's flood," and the people, who know what is coming, greet it with shouts of enthusiasm. For this does not follow exactly the Scripture narrative, but contains a scene in which Noah's wife is represented as refusing to leave her gossips and come into the Ark. At first Noah tries persuasion:

> Good wife, doe now as I the bydd.

But his wife answers:

> By Christ! not or I see more neede,
> though thou stand all the day and stare.

Says poor Noah:

> Lord, that women be crabbed aye,
> And never are meke, that dare I saye,
> that is wel sene by me todaye,
> In witnes of yow ech one.
>
> Good wife, let be all this beere
> that thou makes in this place here;
> for all they wene thou art master,
> And so thou art, by St John.

But even this humble language will not move the obstinate wife. She will not come, she declares, unless her gossips may come too.

> They loved me full well, by Christ ;
> But thou wilt let them in thy chest,
> els rowe forth, Noe, whether thou list,
> And get thee a new wife.

At last Noah's sons offer to bring their mother in, and, arguments failing, they try force.

> In feith, Mother, yet you shall
> Whether you will or not.

Noah welcomes his wife with the words, " Welcome, wife, into this boat," but her answer is ungentle. " Have that for thy mote," she says, and the buffet which accompanies the words brings a shout of laughter from the audience. " Ha, ha ! marry, this is hot," says the discomfited husband. " It is good to be still."

At length the whole company is safely in the Ark. Noah goes in last of all and shuts the window. Then comes a silence lasting a minute or so ; at the end of this interval the window opens, and Noah declares that the forty days are past.

The History of Lot and Abraham follows, " set forth by the Barbers and Wax-chandlers." This is a really beautiful and pathetic play. The audience weeps freely and openly, and even our modern finds that his eyes are wet as he listens to Isaac pleading in childlike fashion for his life ; and, finding that he pleads in vain, meekly submitting to his father's will.

> Father, sith you must needs doe soe
> let it pass lightlie and overgoe ;
> Kneeling on my knees two,
> Your blessing on me spread.
>
> . . . . .
>
> Father, I pray you hide my eyne
> That I see not your sword so keen ;
> Your stroke, Father, would I not seene,
> Lest I against it grille.

Abraham replies :

> Ah, sonne, my heart will breake in three,
> To heare thee speake such wordes to me,
> Jhesu, on me thou have pittie
> that I have most in mynde.

Next comes the play of *Balaam and his Ass*, set forth by the Cappers and Linen Drapers. This is announced by a herald :

> Make room, lordings, and give us way,
> And let Balak come in and play,
> And Balaam that well can say,
> To tell you of prophesying.

This brings the Old Testament plays to an end, though there are four from the New Testament to be played before the end of the day's programme is reached. Already our stranger is weary. He finds the plays crude, sometimes even ridiculous. He smiles when he sees the actor who takes the part of God the Father appear in a white sheep-skin coat, with his face, hands, and hair all gilded : he laughs outright when the devil is seen going about his evil work with great horns and a long, swirling tail. Some of the scenes represented shock him ; he regards them as irreverent, even blasphemous. But the men and women in the crowd about him feel neither scorn nor disgust at these things. They are not, like the watching shade, the product of a highly developed civilization. They are, in these matters, children, with a child's readiness to be pleased and a child's capacity for seeing the awe-inspiring in the grotesque. They laugh heartily when the coal-black demons run into the dragon's mouth, and disappear among the horribly realistic flames beyond. When Herod, dressed as a Saracen, and attended by a boy who makes a great uproar by means of a bladder tied to a stick, " rages on the pagond and also in the strete," they draw back with screams of mock affright, and shout derisive remarks to the actors. Nothing can exceed their appreciation of the comic episodes, such as that of Noah's wife, and they see no irreverence or incongruity in the admission of such an incident into a solemn Scripture narrative. They are moved to real

emotion by the scenes that show dignity and beauty, and weep freely at any appeal to their pity. They make an ideal audience in respect of appreciation and responsiveness, though they lack something of dignity and self-restraint.

As pageant succeeds pageant, as noon comes and as the afternoon passes away, the invisible visitor grows more and more weary, and regrets the obligation he is under of seeing the day's performance to the very end. He looks with astonishment at the people round him, who, unlike himself, are encumbered with bodies which require rest, change, and refreshment. Their opportunities for any of these things have been small, yet they stand patiently, having apparently no inclination to go away while more is to be seen. In the dusk of the lovely summer evening they are still in their places. Queen Margaret is at her window, and the Mayor is in his seat by the High Cross. At last our modern hears the announcement made that the last play "may not be played for lack of day." He feels no inclination to plead for an extension of the privilege that has been accorded him in order that he may witness the pageants of the two succeeding days. With a great sigh of satisfaction he passes back to his own century.

CHAPTER VII

MANUSCRIPTS OF THE MIDDLE AGES

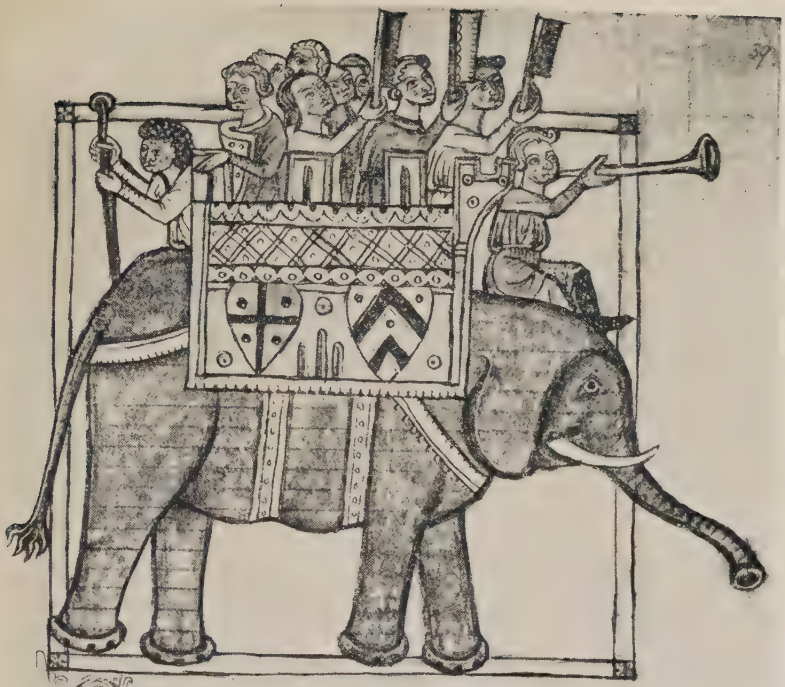
IN the crowds that gathered round the Norman minstrel it would probably have been hard to find a single person —except he were a monk or a priest—who could have read the singer's lay had it been written down ; few of the audience could have spelt out a single line of it. But among the throngs that filled the streets of Chester on that Whit Monday of 1455 there was many a substantial citizen's son and many a young squire from his father's lands by the Dee who had mastered at least the elements of reading and writing, while there were some who could read with ease and fluency. In the years that lay between the Conquest and the fifteenth century the art of reading had been slowly spreading, until at length books had begun to take a real part in the life of the people ; and this part grew more and more important as the country drew toward the great movement which we call the Renaissance.

For two centuries after the Conquest the monasteries remained almost the only places where books were read. Many noted scholars had come to England in the train of William of Normandy, but they were all of them Churchmen. William himself, we are told, loved reading, and his favourite book and constant companion was Cæsar's *Commentaries,* from which he studied the art of war. The Norman nobles were not as illiterate as the Saxon earls, and most of them had learnt to read and write when they were young ; but the duties and excitements that belonged to the life of a knight-at-arms took all their time and all their interest. Most of them admired and respected learning and made what show they could of such scraps as remained to them. They could perhaps follow the familiar service of the Church in Mass-book or psalter and sign their name when it became necessary, but that was, except in

a very few cases, the limit of their attainments. Among the lower classes reading and writing were almost unknown.

The monasteries were not only the places where books were read, they were also the places where books were made and kept. The history of books during the early Middle Ages is almost entirely a monastic history, with which the outside world is scarcely concerned. Fortunately for us, the monks wrote many books about themselves and their affairs, so that this history is fairly clear to us. One of the most important of these books is that containing the regulations which Lanfranc drew up for the monasteries under his direction. Here are set down in the utmost detail the rules for work and worship, eating and sleep ; so that we can follow the monk in his daily round, and see him at his task of making books.

The plan of life in the Middle Ages made little provision for privacy for persons of any rank or age ; least of all was there any privacy for a monk in a monastery. All monasteries that were built according to the Norman plan had a cloister, which was a wide passage, arched and roofed, running round one or more sides of a square formed by the monastic buildings. The outer side of the passage opened on to a square of grass or flower-beds, and the cloister had on this side no protection from the weather, except in a few cases, where glass was placed in the upper part of the arches. In this cloister the monks spent nearly all of their time that was not given to praying in the church, eating in the refectory, sleeping in the dormitory, or doing manual work in the house or the fields. From early morning until evening it was full of the stir and movement of many activities. In one corner, it might be, a monk was teaching a group of children their letters or their *Credo* ; a little way off another was lecturing to more advanced pupils on the works of the Fathers of the Church, or perhaps on Virgil or the epistles of St Paul. On the other side was a monk conducting a singing class in preparation for the next Church festival. In a sheltered, sunny corner sat the Prior chatting with a lawyer or a factor who had come on monastic business and was telling the news of the outside world—the monks near



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Page from a Bestiary

A bestiary was a treatise on the nature of beasts, birds, and fishes. Written in England early in the thirteenth century.

Harl. MSS., British Museum

by eagerly listening. A few walked up and down, their eyes bent on the ground, trying to meditate on holy things in spite of the bustle around them. Here was a monk busy with saw and hammer, there another patching an old shoe ; and at carefully chosen places in the cloister, where the light fell clearly, were other monks, sitting at trestle tables, writing diligently. It is with these latter that we to-day are specially concerned, for it was chiefly by their labours that literature in England was kept alive during the troubled centuries that followed the Conquest.

In summer weather the cloister was a pleasant enough place for the copyist to work in, supposing that he had trained himself to the necessary concentration. But in the winter he wrote under great difficulties, and sometimes, inured as he was to cold and hardness, he had to stop altogether.

Orderic, an English monk belonging to a Norman abbey, writes :

> Now, stiffened with the winter cold, I shall employ myself in other occupations, and, very weary, I propose to finish this present book. But when the fine weather of the calm spring returns, I will take up again what I have imperfectly related, or what yet remains unsaid, and, by God's help, I will fully unfold with a truthful pen the chances of war and peace among our countrymen.

Later on he says :

> Having happened to mention St William of the Short Nose, I take the opportunity of inserting in my history a short account of his life. I am satisfied that it is very little known in this province, and there are many persons who will be gratified by being furnished with a faithful memoir of so distinguished a saint. Antony, a monk of Winchester, brought it here not long since, and complied with our eager desire to see it. There is, indeed, a story in verse concerning St William, which is commonly sung by the minstrels, but the preference must be justly given to an authentic narrative, written with care by learned monks, and which is reverently recited by studious readers in the presence of the assembled brethren. But as the bearer was in haste to depart, and the severe winter's frost prevented me from writing, I made a short abridgment on my tablets, which I now hasten to transfer correctly to parchment.

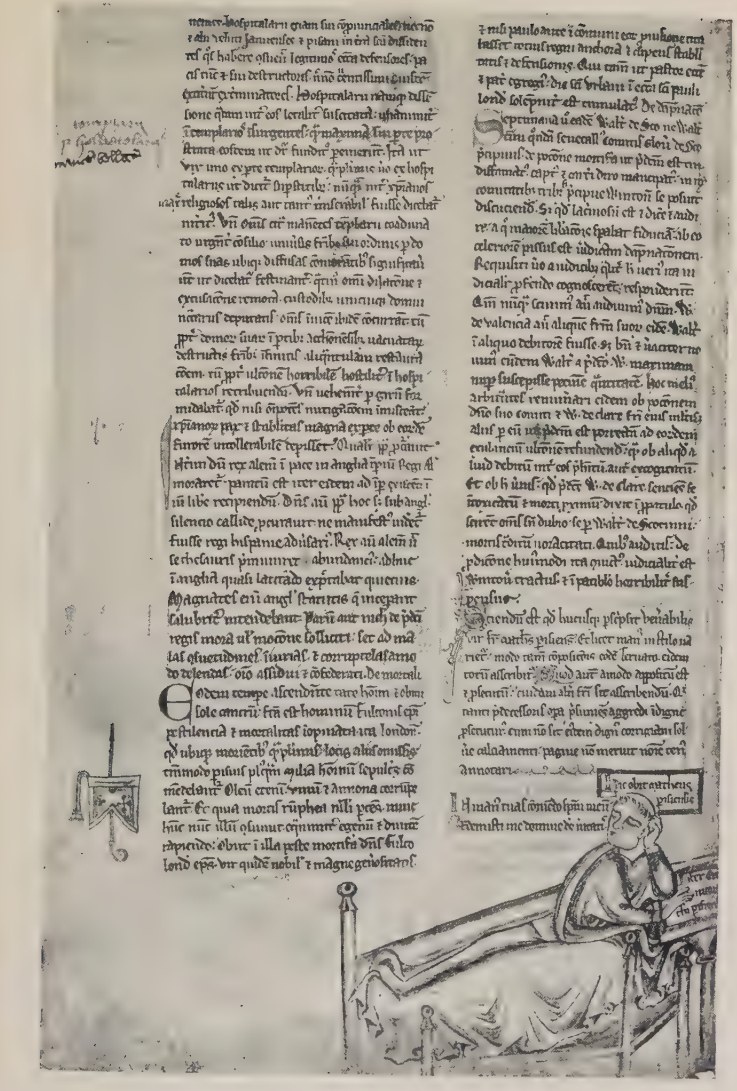
In almost every monastery there was a chronicler who wrote a careful account of the happenings in his house from day to day, and in some of the larger abbeys histories rather than chronicles were written. The rich and important Abbey of St Albans, by reason of its situation on the high road to London, received as its guests many of the travellers who were constantly passing to and from the capital, and so was kept informed of the news of the Court and the City. During the first half of the thirteenth century the *Chronica Majora* that was written there was really a history of England.

Some of the monks were merely copyists. They wrote out the service-books and the classical works which were needed in large numbers by the schools and universities. They transcribed the notes of the chroniclers, and made fair copies of their completed works. They wrote letters and business documents, and the more skilful copied rare manuscripts borrowed from other monasteries.

By the end of the twelfth century scriptoriums, or special rooms where writing might be carried on, had been added to many of the larger monasteries. Here monks chosen for the work wrote diligently, and more and more copies were turned out as the number of readers in the country increased. Homilies, legends, romances, and ballads began to be in demand, and these were written in French or in English instead of the Latin of the more learned works.

The writing of these books was done with the closest and most loving care, and the " fair, curiously shaped letters " of themselves made it beautiful. But the art of illumination had come over from the Continent with the Normans, whose work went far beyond the crude attempts at ornament made by the Saxons. Soon among the clear black characters appeared glowing spots of colour—wonderfully formed initial letters and beautiful marginal illustrations, shining with silver and gold and scarlet and azure. Longfellow in *The Golden Legend* makes his twelfth-century monk, Friar Pacificus, say :

> There, now, is an initial letter !
> Saint Ulric himself never made a better !



PAGE OF THE MANUSCRIPT OF "CHRONICA MAJORA"

At the point where Matthew Paris's work breaks off in 1259. The illustration is a portrait of the author, and is thought to be by himself.

Royal MSS., British Museum

Finished down to the leaf and the snail,
Down to the eyes on the peacock's tail!
And now, as I turn the volume over,
And see what lies between cover and cover,
What treasures of art these pages hold,
All ablaze with crimson and gold,
God forgive me! I seem to feel
A certain satisfaction steal
Into my heart, and into my brain,
As if my talent had not lain
Wrapped in a napkin, and all in vain.
Yes, I might almost say to the Lord,
Here is a copy of Thy Word.
Written out with much toil and pain;
Take it, O Lord, and let it be
As something I have done for Thee!

Books such as these took months, sometimes years, of labour, and when they were finished they were either kept among the treasures of the monastery or sold for a high price to a patron, who not infrequently returned his purchase as a gift to that or some other religious body. But besides its collection of rare manuscripts every monastery had a library, probably of several hundred volumes, for the use of its members. Lanfranc's regulations concerning these books tell us something of what was expected in the way of reading from the ordinary monk of those days. The first Monday in Lent was the day fixed for the distribution of the books.

Before the brethren come into the chapter, the keeper of the books is to have the books collected in the chapter-house and spread on a carpet, except those which have been given out for use during the past year. These last the brethren, coming into chapter, are to bring with them, each one having his book in his hand, of which they ought to have had notice of the keeper of the books in the chapter of the day before. The rule of St Benedict about the observances of Lent is to be read. Then, when there has been a discourse out of it, the keeper of the books is to read a note as to how the brethren have had books in the last year. As each one hears his name mentioned, he is to return the work which was given him to read the last year. And he who is aware that he has not read through the book which he received, is to prostrate himself and declare his fault and ask indulgence. Then again the

> keeper of the books is to give to each of the brethren another book to read, and when the books have been distributed in order, the keeper is to record in a note the names of the books and of those who have received them.

As time went on others besides the monks employed themselves in copying. Rich men began to form collections of manuscripts, and were willing to pay high prices for good work. Some of them kept a staff of copyists constantly employed. Famous artists and scholars took up the work, and princes were eager to be their patrons. Public competitions were organized, and rewards offered for the best specimens of writing and illuminating. Philip the Good, Duke of Burgundy, offered prizes for " the best illuminating and border painting on vellum and the fairest writing on vellum." Gerard, the hero of Charles Reade's *The Cloister and the Hearth*, returning from Rotterdam, where the competitors' work had been exhibited, described it with rapture.

> When I came to the illuminated work from Ghent and Bruges my heart sank. Mine was dirt by the side of it. For the first minute I could almost have cried ; but I prayed for a better spirit, and presently I was able to enjoy them, and thank God for those lovely works, and for those skilful, patient craftsmen whom I own my masters.

Of this same Philip the Good we are told :

> His library surpasses all others, for from his youth he has had in his service numerous transcribers, scholars, historians, and scribes in various countries, all diligently working, so that now there is not a prince in all Christendom who has so varied and so rich a library.

In England the art of book-making advanced less rapidly ; yet here too kings and nobles held it in honour. The " Issues of the Exchequer " show that Edward III bought of Isabella of Lancaster, a nun, a manuscript romance for £66 13*s.* 4*d.* At that time an ox could be bought for 12*s.*, so the book cost as much as 111 oxen. For the young Prince Richard the King bought two volumes, one containing *The Romaunt of the Rose*, the other the romances of Perceval and Gawain. The price paid for these two, together with a bible, was £28.

Froissart tells us that when he visited Richard II in 1394 he had " beforehand caused to be written, engrossed, and illuminated all the amorous and moral treatises that in the lapse of 34 years I had by the grace of God and of Love made and compiled." This book he presented to the King.

> He opened it and looked inside and it pleased him greatly ; and please him well it might, for it was illuminated, written and ornamented, and covered in scarlet velvet, with ten silver nails gilded with gold, and golden roses in the middle, and with two great clasps gilded and richly worked in the middle with golden roses. Then the King asked me of what it treated and I told him : of Love. With this answer he was much rejoiced and looked inside in several places, and read therein, for he spoke and read French full well ; and then had it taken by one of his knights, whom he called Sir Richard Credon, and carried into his withdrawing room, and treated me better and better.

But of all the royal patrons of books Humphrey, Duke of Gloucester, uncle of Henry VI, was the most generous and the most enthusiastic. " The good duke Humphrey," Latimer tells us, " kept such a house as was never yet kept in England," in which was stored the splendid collection of books—chiefly copies of Greek and Latin classics and Italian poetry—which he had gathered with care and diligence and great expense through many years. All these books—about six hundred—he presented to the University of Oxford, and built a fine library in which they were to be kept, and which is called by his name to this day.

Authors employed scribes to make fair copies of their works, and were sometimes angered by the way in which their verses were marred by careless mistakes. Chaucer was moved to address " Adam his owne scriveyne " in very vigorous terms :

> Adam Scriveyn, if ever it thee befalle,
> Bocce or Troylus for to written newe,
> Under thy long lokkes thou most have the scalle
> But after my making thou write more trewe,
> So ofte a day I mot thy work renewe,
> Hit to correcte and eek to rubbe and scrape :
> And al is through thy negligence and rape.

In one of the arts belonging to book-making England stood first among the nations, and that was the art of binding. The binding was usually made of solid wooden boards, covered with leather or velvet, and with four or five raised bands across the back. In *Books in Manuscript* Falconer Madan says :

> The sewing of the sheets and passing of the thread over these bands usually results in a firmness and permanence which no ordinary modern book possesses. Not infrequently the solid oak sides may have given way under violent treatment, from too great rigidity, while the sewing remains perfectly sound. In general, however, the oak sides are as permanent as the back, and the solid pegging by which the parchment strings issuing from the thread-sewn back are wedged into the small square holes and grooves cut in the inner oak sides is a sight worth seeing for workmanship and indestructibility.

The opening of the fifteenth century found the scribes and copyists busier than ever before. The demand for books steadily increased, because each year there were more people who could read them. Grammar schools were being established in many parts of the country, usually in connexion with a convent or a cathedral. The fifteenth century was a time of wonderful advancement for the English towns, and among the good things that the townsfolk had learned to appreciate and strive after learning took a high place. Merchants and country gentlemen, aldermen of city Corporations, great ladies and busy housewives, all began to discover how immensely the arts of reading and writing helped them in managing their business, their estate, or their household. The large number of account books, business papers, and private letters that have come down to us shows how sturdily they all set to work to acquire the coveted accomplishments, and how they took care that their children should not be behindhand, but should, in the words used long before by King Alfred, " abide by their book till they could well understand English writing." It was not necessary for them to be able to read French, for French, except at the Court, had almost disappeared.

For all these people the scribes had to make copies of primers, spelling books, dictionaries, cookery books,

MEDIEVAL BOOKBINDING

The cover is of stout wooden boards covered with white doeskin stained pink. This book was bound by the monks of the Priory of St Swithin, Winchester, *c.* 1150.

British Museum

homilies, chronicles, books of etiquette, manuals of various kinds. But it was not from the buyers of these, who paid thriftily at the rate of twopence a page for their little books, that the scribe gained his greatest profit and his greatest glory. These came from the large and increasing company of men and women and boys and girls who had discovered that the art of reading could bring them stories in far richer abundance than could the minstrel or the player. The citizen of the fifteenth century did not grudge to spend the substantial sum that would buy a book of stories for the delight of himself and his family. Many a burgher's living-room held a small store of these treasures plainly written on sheepskin in a good, clear hand; not without mistakes, yet with fewer than might have been expected; without illumination or ornament, and strongly bound in oak boards.

Stories from the *Gesta Romanorum* and the Arthurian legend, romances, chronicles, poems, travels, legends, ballads, fables—of these the scribes made copies with all the speed they could, and yet were not able to keep up with the demand. Fifty copies of *The Canterbury Tales* are still in existence, and three hundred of *The Travels of Sir John Mandeville*, showing how large a number must originally have been made. Sir John Paston, a Norfolk gentleman who lived in the second half of the fifteenth century, possessed a collection of books; in the catalogue that he made of them we read of "a book had of my hostess at the George," which contained *The Death of Arthur, Guy of Warwick, King Richard Cœur-de-Lion*, and *A Chronicle of Edward the III*; "a black book with *The Legend of Ladies*" (probably Chaucer's *Legende of Good Women*); *The Parliament of Birds* (Chaucer's *Parliament of Fowls*), *The Temple of Glass* (Lydgate), *Palatyse and Scitacus*, and *The Green Knight*. There were also several classical stories, two or three ballads, lives of saints, books of heraldry, and books of devotion.

Several other members of the Paston family had books, though not a large collection such as that of Sir John; and it is probable that most families of the same standing were gradually gathering the beginnings of a library.

him such a gift as it has been the happy lot of but few men to be able to offer to their country.

He came to London and took a house near the King's palace at Westminster, where at that time a busy, thriving colony was gathered round a magnificent Court. From this house he hung out the sign of the Red Pale, the same which he had seen marking the houses of the printers of Flanders. Then, with his one simple printing-press and two founts of type, he set to work.

He entered on his great adventure with ardour and conviction, which were made effective by his industry and his sound, sober sense. He took pains to find out which books were in the greatest demand; he made translations from the popular French romances; he wrote delightful prefaces to the books which he printed, telling his aims and his difficulties. He says:

> When I resolved upon setting up a press in Westminster, I knew full well that it was an enterprise full of danger. For I had seen my friend Colard, printer of Bruges, fain to fly from the city in poverty and debt, and I had seen Melchior of Augsburg dying a bankrupt, and I had heard how Siveynheim and Pannarts in Rome had petitioned the Pope for help. Yet I hoped, by the favour and countenance of His Highness the King, to succeed. This have I done; yet not as I hoped to do. For I thought that the quick production and the cheapness of books would cause many to buy them who hitherto had been content to live without the solace of poetry and romance and without the instruction of Cato and Boethius. Again, I thought that there are schools and colleges where books must be studied, and I hoped that they would find it better to print than to copy. And there are Religious Houses, where they are for ever engaged in copying Psalters and Service Books. Surely, I thought, it will be better for the good monks to print than to copy. I forgot, moreover, that there was a great stock in hand of written books; in every monastery a store which must first be used up, and in every College there were written books for the student which must first be worn out before there would be question of replacing them with printed books. Also I forgot the great company of copyists, illuminators, limners, and those who make and sell vellum and fine parchment for the copyists. And I found, moreover, to my surprise, that there were many great lords to wit, who cared nothing for cheapness, and who scoffed at my woodcuts compared with the illumina-

tions in red and blue and gold which adorned their written works. He who would embark upon a new trade must reckon with those who make their livelihood in the old trade. Wherefore my Art of Printing had many enemies at the outset and few friends. So that the demand for my books has not been found equal to the number which I have put forth, and I should have been ruined like Colard and bankrupt like Melchior were it not for the help of my lord of Arundel and others, who protected me against the certain loss which threatened.

So he went on his laborious, anxious, but, we must believe, happy way; and though he did not prosper according to his hopes, yet before many years had passed the workshops at the Sign of the Red Pale were filled with stirring and busy life. Speaking of a time nearly fourteen years after the press had been set up, W. Blades, Caxton's biographer, says:

It is not very difficult to picture the wooden building in the Almonry occupied by his sedate but busy workmen. We can look in at yonder window and see the venerable master printer himself "sittyng in his studye where lay great and diverse pamflettes and bookys." The towers of Westminster Abbey cast their shadows across the room, for he is an early riser, and already at work upon his translation of the new French romance called *Eneydos*. The "fayre and ornate termes" of his author give him "grete plasyr," and he labours almost without intermission till the low sun, blazing the western windows, warns him of the day's decline. Again, we watch him pass with observant eye through the rooms where his servants are at work; we see the movements of the compositors who ply their rapid fingers close to the narrow windows; we hear the thud, thud of the wooden presses as the workmen 'pull to' and 'send home' the bar, discussing meanwhile the latest news; and we sympathise with the binder, who, hammering away at the volume between his knees, looks in despair at the ever-increasing progeny of his master's art. Piles of books and "printed quayres" rise on all sides, and many a wise head is ominously shaken at the folly of supposing that purchasers can be found for so many books. Nevertheless, Caxton pursues his busy course, ever at work, with mind and body, preparing copy for the press, and guiding and instructing his workmen in the art which he learned at Bruges "at great charge and dispense."

The printing type was formed at first on the model of the writing letters, the aim of the printer being to produce

a work as much like a manuscript as possible. At the time of the Renaissance this type was replaced by the clearer and simpler type that was used in Italy. There was no punctuation, but the point was used, as it had been used in the manuscripts, to separate words. Later the oblique stroke (/), which developed into the comma, and the double point (:) came into use, but there was no regular system. Each fresh paragraph was marked ¶. At first painters and illuminators were employed to put in the ornamented initial letters and the illustrations, but later this was done by means of wooden blocks upon which the figure was cut. These woodcuts were first used in 1480. The workmanship was rough, and the pictures produced were crude and inartistic. But from the printer's point of view they were successful, for they were clear, and answered the purpose for which they were intended.

The first book—saving perhaps some small pamphlets—that came from the Sign of the Red Pale was *The History of Jason*; the second was Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales*. Afterward came romances, chronicles, books of manners, psalters, service-books, school texts—all those which the experience of the copyists had shown to be in the greatest demand. Caxton advertised his books as far as it was possible to do so in those days. He set up notices at his printing office, telling what he had to sell.

> If it plese ony man spirituel or temporel to bye ony copyes of two or three Comemoracios of Salisburi use emprynted after the forme of this present letter whiche ben wel & truly correct, late hym come to Westmonester in the Almonesrye at the reed pale, and he shal have them good chepe.

We do not quite know what price Caxton considered "good chepe," but his work was certainly cheaper than that of the scribes. When he died in 1491 he left fifteen copies of his *Golden Legend* to his parish church, and these were sold during the next ten years at prices varying from 5*s*. 4*d*. to 6*s*. 8*d*. each.

Printing-presses had been set up at Oxford in 1478 and at St Albans in 1479, and from both of these important books were sent out, most of them learned works, written

He ſhal no goſpel gloſe here ne teche
We leue al in the grete god quod he
He wolde ſowe ſom difficultye
Or ſprynten cokyl in oure clene corn
And therfore hoost I warne the bifor
My holy body ſhal a take telle
And I ſhalle clynke you a holy belle
That it ſhal walyn alle this company
But it ſhal nat be of philoſophy
Ne of phyſlias ne termes queynte of lawe
There is but lytel latyn in my mawe

Here endith the ſquyers prologue
And here begynneth his Tale

A Tſurrye in the londe of Tartary
There dwelled a kyng that warred ryſſy
Throughout whiche thei dyed many a doughty man

PAGE FROM "THE CANTERBURY TALES"
Reduced. Printed in London by Pynson, about 1492.

in Latin. After Caxton's death his assistant, Wynkyn de Worde, carried on his work, and before the end of the century several small printing businesses were being carried on in different parts of London. Not many books were produced, and of such as were the workmanship was much inferior to that which came from foreign presses. But a beginning had been made. Henceforward Englishmen and Englishwomen who could read—and these were still only a very small part of the entire population, though their number was increasing—might, if they chose, buy printed books at a moderate price instead of the more costly manuscripts; and the means had been established to meet a greater demand when that demand should come.

CHAPTER IX

THE SCHOOLBOY AND HIS BOOKS

FOR many generations the English schoolboy [1] had no books of his own. The Northumbrian youths who, in the eighth century, flocked to the monasteries of Jarrow and Whitby, learned their letters from the service-books written out by the monks for use in the monastic chapel or, possibly, from copies of the alphabet made on strips of parchment. Their first reading lessons were the Lord's Prayer and the Creed, and when they had mastered these they went on to the Psalms and the offices of the Church—all, of course, in Latin. Not many got beyond these, and for those who did there were the works of the Fathers in the monastic library.

Alfred the Great when he was a boy possessed a book, and the fact has become a matter of history. But this was one of the rare and costly manuscripts which in those days only the very rich could hope to possess, and was in no sense a schoolboy's book.

When Alfred grew up and founded schools in his kingdom he ordered that the lads who were taught there should learn to read and write, not Latin only, but, first and most important, their own English tongue; and he himself translated many books out of the Latin for their use. Most of these were serious works on philosophy and theology, but inserted in one of them was the account of the adventures of Othere and Wulfstan, two Scandinavian seamen who had made several voyages of exploration in the Baltic and the White seas. The King told the story as he had heard it from the mouths of the two adventurers themselves, and it is a yarn such as schoolboys would delight in. But whether any of the lads in Alfred's schools had progressed so far as

[1] Much interesting matter about the schoolboy will be found in *The Boy through the Ages*, by Dorothy Margaret Stuart (Harrap).

to be able to read for pleasure remains a matter of doubt; and if they had the few precious copies of the book were the property of the monastery to which the school was attached, and no boy possessed one of his own.

Though Alfred tried hard to make the reading and writing of English an important part of an English boy's education, he could not prevail against the views and practice of the Church, in which Latin took the first place; and as most of the schools of those days were attached to monasteries or religious foundations of some kind Latin it was that the boys chiefly studied. The first schoolbook of whose use we find traces in England is an elementary Latin grammar. This grammar was written by a famous teacher who lived in Rome about the middle of the fourth century. He wrote it for the use of his pupils, of whom St Jerome was one. This great teacher's name was Donatus, and the book was called familiarly the *Donat.* There is a copy of it in the British Museum which is written in Anglo-Saxon characters and dates from the ninth century. It had probably been in general use on the Continent for about five hundred years before it found its way to England. It remained in use all through the Middle Ages, and was so well known that "Donat" came to stand as a general name for all the Latin grammars that appeared from time to time, and at length for a primer or elementary treatise on any subject.

The first book for schoolboys which was written in England was the *Colloquy* of Ælfric, Abbot of Evesham. He wrote it in 992 for the use of the novices in his monastery school. It is in Latin, in the form of a conversation between a master and his pupils. "We boys beseech thee, O master," it begins, "teach us to speak Latin rightly; for we are unlearned and speak corruptly." "What will ye speak?" asks the master, and the spokesman pupil replies, "What care we so that we only speak rightly, not basely or in old wives' fashion?" "Will ye be flogged in your learning?" the master demands, and the pupil makes diplomatic answer, "We love rather to be beaten for learning's sake than to be ignorant, but we know that thou art a kindly man, who will not beat us unless we compel thee." "Well then," says the

master, "what is thy daily work?" "I am a professed monk," is the reply, "and I shall sing daily my seven services with the brethren, and am busy with reading and psalmody; yet in the meantime I would fain learn to speak in the Latin tongue." "And these thy fellows," inquires the master, "what know they?" "Some are ploughers," the young man answers, "others shepherds; some are cowherds, and some also are hunters, fishers, fowlers; some are merchants or cobblers or salters or bakers in this place." Then by means of questions and answers each of these occupations is fully described, and thus a large number of words in common use are learned and the pupils gain a full and varied vocabulary.

It would appear from this colloquy that the pupils in the monastic school were beyond the age of ordinary schoolboys, and we know from other sources that there were in such schools youths and even full-grown men. But there were quite young children also. Orderic, who was born in 1075, says:

> When I was five years old I was delivered over to school in the city of Shrewsbury, and there I offered the first services of clerkship in the church of the holy Apostles, St Peter and St Paul. There Sigward, the famous priest, taught me for five years the letters of the Camena Nicostrata

—this is Orderic's learned fashion of denoting the alphabet, which is said to have been the invention of the Italian Muse Nicostrata—

> and broke me in to Psalms and hymns and other necessary instruction.

Schools increased in number rapidly after the Conquest. Theobald of Etampes, a scholar who lectured at Oxford in the early part of the twelfth century, said that there were then schools in every town and village, and as many skilled masters as ministers of the royal exchequer. Chaucer's Prioress tells how "in a greet citie" there was a school where the pupils learned "to singen and to rede, as smale children doon in hire childhede." Among these children was a widow's son, a little boy seven years old, who sat in

FIFTEENTH-CENTURY GRAMMAR SCHOOL

A LADY TEACHING HER SON

From manuscripts in the British Museum

school learning his primer or service-book and listening to the elder pupils singing their Latin hymns. This school was what was called a " song school," where the children, as the Prioress said, learned " to singen and to rede " the services of the Church and little else. There were grammar schools also, where more advanced work was done and the pupils went on to the learning of Latin grammar and the reading of Latin texts. Both the song schools and the grammar schools were intended mainly for the children of substantial burghers and farmers. The nobility had tutors at home for their sons, and many received into their houses a small number of young men of good birth who were trained there in book-learning as well as in more active exercises. For the great mass of the poorer classes little educational provision was made.

By this time—the time of Chaucer—the stock of schoolboys' books had increased, though not very largely. There were various word-books, or simple dictionaries, generally called " Probus," from Probus of Beyrout, who wrote the one most commonly used. There was the rhyming Latin grammar of Alexander de Villa Dei ; and there was the history, called *Anglorum Prœlia*, of Christopher Ocland, also in Latin verse. About 1486 came the first Latin grammar written in England, *Lac Puerorum, or Mylk for Children*, by Master John Holt, which had diagrams to help the memory. There were also editions of various Latin classics and a Latin version of Æsop's *Fables*. But it is doubtful whether many schoolboys possessed a copy of even one of these for his own private use. Each school had probably a few copies which were used by the master. The boys wrote, from his dictation, lists of words, declensions, conjugations, and so forth on the tablets coated with wax which were still in use ; and these lists were copied out later on strips of parchment.

Late in the fourteenth century or early in the fifteenth came the first book which children might claim as being really their own. We do not know who first thought of it. Perhaps it was a monk who had written out, in his beautiful clear handwriting, many copies of the alphabet, the Creed, and the Lord's Prayer, taking, as a good craftsman must,

pains to turn out work of his best. He had seen these thumbed and creased in the dirty hands of careless children until they became objects which shamed his workman's pride. He thought and experimented, laying a piece of thin horn over the letters, testing its strength and transparency; then fitting it into a wooden frame, altering and improving, until at last he produced something in shape like a battledore or hand mirror, into which he fitted a piece of inscribed vellum or paper, over this fastening a sheet of horn.

Such was the hornbook, which remained in use in England up to the time of George II. The wooden frame was usually about four inches long and three inches wide, and had a short handle with a hole in it, through which was passed a string which served to fasten the hornbook to the pupil's waist. On the enclosed parchment or paper was written first the alphabet, in large and in small letters, preceded by a cross. From this the letters came to be called Christ's cross row and, later, criss-cross row, so that it was common to hear it said of a child who was learning to read that he knew his criss-cross row. Then followed the Lord's Prayer and the Creed. As time went on some additions were made—the vowels, and various combinations of letters, words of one syllable, the Roman numerals—but the hornbook remained substantially the same through all the years that it was in use.

The introduction of printing made hornbooks, like all other books, more plentiful and cheaper. Rich people had their children's hornbooks ornamented and gilded, the back covered with stamped leather and the handle inlaid; but the ordinary schoolboy used a plain, durable, and cheap article. There is a rhyme belonging to the early seventeenth century which says:

> The Hornbook is the seed and grain
> Of skill by which we learning first attaine,
> And though it be accounted small of many,
> And haply bought for twopence or a penny,
> Yet will the teaching somewhat costly be
> Ere they attain unto the full degree
> Of Scholarship and Art.

The price here seems to have been put somewhat high, for some school accounts of the same period give hornbooks at threepence a dozen, which—always remembering that money then had at least twelve times its present purchasing power—seems quite reasonable. It is pleasing to read that even in those days, when the modern doctrine of making learning easy and pleasant to the child had not been heard of and flogging was an accepted part of the daily round, there were gingerbread hornbooks by means of which lucky youngsters were enticed into acquaintance with the criss-cross row. Said the inscription on one of these :

> To Master John, the English maid
> A Horn Book gives of Ginger Bread ;
> And that the child may learn the better
> As he can name he eats the letter.

To come back to our fifteenth-century schoolboy. We see him going off to school—his sister with him, for girls as well as boys were taught at the schools of the Middle Ages—with a hornbook fastened to his girdle, a fescue, or small pointer made of wood or bone, attached, and, hanging beside it, tablets of bone or ivory coated with wax. Thus equipped went William Caxton across the pleasant meadows of the Weald of Kent, and thus went Thomas More down Cheapside toward St Anthony's School in Threadneedle Street ; thus, too, went Hugh Latimer along the Leicestershire lanes from his father's farm at Thurcaston and Thomas Wolsey through the narrow streets of Ipswich. Many of these boys probably carried also a Donat and a Probus in a stout satchel, for the scribes grew busier as the fifteenth century went on, and copies of such books were multiplied.

When the sixteenth century opened the day of the Donat was nearly over. In 1511 Dean Colet established his new school of St Paul's, and, considering carefully what books would best serve his scholars, he found no Latin grammar to his liking and resolved that a new one must be written. He commissioned one of his friends to do this, but the new grammar when presented to him pleased him no better than the old. It was too long and too learned, he said, for his little beginners. There was nothing for it but

to write one himself, and he set to work. In his preface he says:

> Albeit many have written and have made many introductions into Latin speech, called Donates and Accidens, in Latin tongue and in English, in such plenty that it should seem to suffice, yet, nevertheless, for the love and zeal that I have to the new School of Pauls, and to the children of the same, I have also of the eight parts of grammar made this little book. . . . In which, if any new thing be of me it is alonely that I have put these ' parts ' in a more clear order, and I have made them a little more easy to young wits than (methinketh) they were before; judging that nothing may be too soft nor too familiar for little children, specially learning a tongue unto them all strange. In which little book I have left many things out of purpose, considering the tenderness and small capacity of little minds.

Colet's grammar was afterward altered and added to by William Lilly, the High Master of the new school of St Paul's, and by Erasmus. It was in general use first as *Lilly's Latin Grammar*, and afterward as *The Eton Latin Grammar* up to the nineteenth century.

In the " Statutes " laid down for the grammar school founded by Cardinal Wolsey at Ipswich is a list of the books to be used in the school:

> *Form II.* Books, if any: Lilly's *Carmen Monitorium*, Cato's *Precepts*, better known as the *Moralia*.
> *Form III.* Æsop's *Fables*, Lilly's *Genders*.
> *Form IV.* Lilly's *Grammar*, Virgil.
> *Form V.* Cicero.
> *Form VI.* Sallust or Cæsar.

Nearly all the grammar schools in the country seem to have used very much the same books as those given in Wolsey's list. Æsop's *Fables* in particular was generally read in the lower forms.

A favourite type of school-book was that written in the form of question and answer, like Ælfric's *Colloquy*. The *Colloquies* of Erasmus stood at the head of these, and next came those of a Spanish writer, Ludovicus Vives. Both these books contained dialogues on familiar subjects, written in Latin, which the pupils were set to learn by heart.

THE GRAMMAR SCHOOL, STRATFORD-ON-AVON

Photo Frith

The reign of Elizabeth brought little change in the fashion of school-books. William Shakespeare and the other burgesses' sons at Stratford Grammar School, Sir Philip Sidney and his high-born companions at the great public school at Shrewsbury, Edmund Spenser and other young Londoners at the newly established Merchant Taylors' School in Suffolk Lane, Francis Drake and his eleven brothers at the little country school in Devonshire—each probably possessed copies of Lilly's *Grammar*, Vives' *Colloquies*, Ocland's *Anglorum Prœlia*, a dictionary or word-book, and one or two Latin texts. They carried to school with them a slate in place of the tablets of their forbears and a copy-book. A little Greek was taught in the upper forms, and a little mathematics. Mr Hope Moncrieff, in his *Book about Schools*, tells us that he has in his possession two seventeenth-century text-books,

> smudged, bescribbled and stained, perhaps by tears long dried in dust. One of them is a complete Latin grammar, syntax, prosody and all, over six hundred pages of it in crabbed print, black letter for a great part. . . . The other engine for mental torment is Mellis's *Ground of Arts*, a comprehensive catechism of arithmetic, from an original dating back to Edward VI, reprinted at London in the year of Charles I's execution. Its pages too are a piebald of black letter, romaic and italic type, broken by tables and by diagrams of heavy black dots for counters used to illustrate the elementary rules like the balls strung on an abacus.

Another schoolboy's book which has survived from the sixteenth century is a copy of *Cæsar*. It is preserved in an Oxford library, and bears the inscription "John Slie, his book, 1589," followed by the verse :

> John Slye is my name
> And with my penn—I writ the same
> God that made—both sea and land,
> Give me grace—to mend my hand.
> The rose is redd—the leves are grene,
> God save—Elizabeth—our noble queen.

Robert Laneham, a London mercer in the days of Elizabeth, says in a letter to a friend,

> I went to school, for sooth, both at St Paul's and also at St Anthony's ; in the fifth form, past Æsop's *Fables*, I wys, read

> Terence : *Vos istace intro auferte* and began my Virgil : *Tityre tu patulæ*. I knew my rules, could construe and parse with the best of them. . . . Stories I delight in, the more ancient and rare the more likesome to me.

This brings us to the question, What books did the schoolboy of medieval and Renaissance days have for amusement and recreation ? The answer is that he had no such books of his own, but must content himself with those that served for his elders. There was indeed published in 1485 a book called *The Babees' Book* and a little earlier Lydgate's *Stans Puer ad Mensam*. Neither of these contained any stories, only precepts concerning a child's behaviour under all imaginable circumstances.

> Pare clene thy nailes, thyn handes wasshe also,
> To fore mete, and whan thow dooest arise ;
> Sitte in that place thow art assigned to :
> Prease [1] not to hye in no maner wise.

We can scarcely think that the " babees " took much delight in reading these very edifying verses, though they may have gleaned some unauthorized enjoyment from the *Testament* in which Lydgate lamented over the sins of his boyhood :

> Ran into garden, applys there I stoll,
> To gadre frutys sparid hegg nor wal,
> To plucke grapys in other mens vynys
> Was moor reedy than for to seyn matynes.

They probably also enjoyed the anonymous rhyme of an exasperated fellow-sufferer :

> I would my master were an hare,
> And all his bokis howndés were
> And I myself a joly huntere,
> To blow my horn I wold not spare !
> For if he were dede I wold not care.

But, after all, these boys were not too greatly to be pitied for having no books of their own. They probably found the ballads and romances of the time excellent reading, and devoured as many as they could get hold of. There were

[1] Press.

books of travel too, and marvellous adventures, which they would read eagerly ; and when the reign of Elizabeth came, and England was filled with the glorious books which still, after three centuries, are the delight of English readers, the children, we are sure, found almost as much to enjoy as did their elders.

CHAPTER X

THE UNIVERSITY STUDENT

TOWARD the middle of the twelfth century a spirit of restlessness seemed to enter into the peoples of Europe. In every country and in every class—except that class which was bound to the soil—there were large numbers of men who were not content to live out their lives in the place where they had been born, as their fathers had done before them. They wanted to be on the move—to pass from town to town and from country to country, to see new faces and new fashions. Travelling in those days was slow and toilsome and dangerous, yet this did not prevent men from taking up eagerly and light-heartedly the wayfaring life.

One of the causes that filled the English roads with moving crowds was the lack of books. There were hundreds of men—mostly young men—who had taken to the wayfaring life in search of books. Let us consider the case of one of these young men, see how he came to start upon his quest, and how he fared in it. We will call him Roger Dale, the son of a carpenter in a thriving Midland town. In every town and village, and in every kind of home, the same thing was happening, so that the name and place matter little.

Roger had been a pupil at the monastery school near his home. He had gone through the usual course of reading and writing, and, being ambitious and fond of his book, could now read Latin very fairly. The time had come for him to leave school, or to make up his mind to join the novices and prepare to become a monk. But he did not want to be a monk. The life of the cloister was far too quiet and obscure for his eager, restless spirit. Nor did he want to follow his father's trade and become a humble carpenter. He wanted to rise to a high place in the world, and he felt that learning would help him. He had looked into some of

the books that were treasured in the library of the monastery, but he did not believe that these were the kind he needed ; they seemed to be mainly about religion and the affairs of the Church. He had heard of logic, philosophy, law, medicine ; and although these were little more than names to him he felt vaguely that through such studies lay the way to greatness.

" Is there no place where I may learn save a monastery, no place where I can find such books as I have need of ? " he asked the monk who was putting before him the advantages of entering the Order.

" There are the universities of Paris and Padua and Bologna, as I have heard," replied the monk, " where learned men lecture to crowds that gather to hear them. But these are far away over the sea."

" Is there no university in England ? " the boy asked.

" There was a traveller who lodged in our monastery last spring-tide," replied the monk. " He told us how at the town of Oxford, on the Thames, a few scholars have gathered these three or four years past to hear Theobald of Etampes and other learned teachers. But it was scarce to be called a university, he said. He had been to Paris and vowed that there is the true home of learning. There the great Abélard teaches and many others, and thousands of students gather from every country in Europe, many from this land. Oxford, he said, was as naught beside Paris."

The path that Roger Dale had been seeking began to open out before him. He would go to Oxford, to Paris afterward perhaps, he said to himself exultantly. But to the monk he said nothing, fearing reproof.

By day and by night he thought of his plan, and the more he thought the more eager was he to set out. Who would help him ? Not his father, who was poor and ignorant, and would almost certainly forbid him with rough words and hearty blows to start on so mad a journey. Not the monks ; they would bid him rest content with the teaching of God's Church. Then Roger thought of his old schoolfellow, John Spirling, the son of the richest merchant in the town. John had been quick and clever at his lessons, but idle. He had

loved better to learn a ballad than a Latin verb, and had been always in trouble with the monks for his boisterous, unruly ways. But John was a merry, stirring fellow, and, as Roger knew, hated the thought of settling down to the dull life of the little town.

He found John and told him of the great idea, and John took fire at once. He would hear of no difficulties or obstacles ; he was all for starting without delay. " Money ? I can get money," he said, " as much as will suffice for both. Doubtless my father, like thine, would give me but a rough answer did I ask his leave to set out on this journey. So I will not ask it. We will steal away one morning, and then heigho for the road and the forest ! "

" And the university of Oxford, and all its learning," put in Roger.

" Aye," replied John, a little slightingly, " but I care not so much about that. 'Tis the free life of the wayfarer that I crave, though I shall like well to see this wonderful university of thine with its crowd of folks."

So the two talked together, and agreed to start four days from that time and to tell no one of their plan. They knew nothing of the way save that they must travel southward, but they doubted not to find guidance.

On the second day John sought Roger hastily. " Come," he said, " I have found at the guest-house of the monastery a wandering student who is on his way to Oxford. Come and hear what he says."

This student was thin and pale and older by at least ten years than the two boys ; and before he had answered many of their eager questions Roger Dale perceived that here was a true scholar, possessed with a thirst for learning for its own sake, not for what it would bring. His name, he told them, was Adam Pinnock. His father and mother were lately dead and had left him a large estate ; but he had set his steward to look after this while he went back to Oxford, where he had already spent three years. The servant who travelled with him was as keen a student as his master, thirsting for the books and the teaching that were to be found at the university. 'Twas growing rapidly, Master Pinnock assured

them, and was on the way to be a rare seat of learning. He knew the road thither and would guide them.

Early the next morning they set out, Roger and John stealing from their homes before any were awake. Master Pinnock met them, and they followed him through woods and lanes to the great high-road that led southward.

Many days they spent in the fine summer weather, journeying along that road, and many folks they met. There were travellers on horseback—rich merchants going carefully with their wares, their servants armed with knives and cudgels; abbots with their train of monks; my lord moving from one country house to another with a procession of heavy, lumbering carts to carry his household gear; my lady in her curious vehicle, like a tunnel resting on a stout platform, drawn by four horses; King's messengers and great men's servants, finely mounted. There were travellers on foot also—minstrels, tumblers, beggars, quacks, palmers, pilgrims, friars, pedlars—true wayfarers, most of them with ragged clothes, dirty faces, glib tongues, and merry hearts. There were a good many students bound, like Roger and his party, for Oxford or for Paris, and to these they eagerly joined themselves; so that before long they were travelling in a band of a score or more, sharing supplies, sleeping sometimes in the guest-house of a monastery, sometimes in an alehouse, often under a hedge or a forest tree. Roger kept the purse for himself and his friend, though most of the money it contained belonged to John; but he took little out of it, for all along the road folks were kind to the wandering students and often gave them a meal or a trifle of food to put in their pouches. At each village they came to John usually managed to gather a little money or meat by the singing of ballads and by merry drolleries; and Roger sometimes did a job of carpentering at the inn or the manor. So they fared on.

At length they came in sight of Oxford, the busy, thriving city by the Thames where the great Norman castle, the stately abbey, the grey old priory, and the towers of many churches rose above the huddle of houses crowded within its walls. Very fair it looked as they drew near along the road, with the green meadows stretching away outside toward the

great forests that lay beyond. The little group of eager youths pressed on, and soon entered the gates; and found the narrow streets thronged with youths like themselves, as ragged, as unkempt, and as vagabond. Here and there were richly clad young nobles with their following of liveried servants; here and there youths of sober and decent appearance, and older men, scholarly and dignified. There were a few little fellows who could not have been more than twelve years old; there was a sprinkling of monks and friars. But all these were far outnumbered by the crowd of eager, ill-clad youths, keen-faced and bright-eyed, who laughed and sang and jostled each other with comradely roughness as they passed toward the hall or church-porch or open space where the special master whose lectures they attended was waiting for them.

The newcomers soon settled into their places, found a poor lodging in one of the dirty lanes by the university church of St Mary's, chose the masters whose lectures they wished to attend, and paid the small fee required by each of these. Then they joined the noisy crowd that, with parchment and pen and ink-horn in hand, flocked to the appointed places.

The method of teaching was laid down by the rules of the university. The master read the text from the manuscript copy of one of the few Latin works that were available at that time, chiefly those of Aristotle, Virgil, and Ovid. He spoke slowly, stopping at the end of each sentence to give the students time to copy it down. Then he expounded the passage, in Latin, after the same fashion. The students afterward learned by heart what they had written down. Thus they made their own books, which were kept carefully for reference.

In his first years at the university the student learned grammar, logic, and rhetoric. Then he passed to arithmetic, geometry, music, and astronomy. In order to gain a full degree he must spend eight years at the university. There were no written examinations. The candidate must uphold certain theses in public disputations and defend them against all comers; he must also give lectures on set subjects. No Greek was taught in the universities, and only a smattering

of mathematics. The Latin text of the Bible was studied, and was made the basis of endless arguments and theories and interpretations, until the sense of the original text was lost in the maze of learned commentary that had formed around it.

When the lectures of the day were over the university had no further hold upon the riotous crowd that streamed back through the streets, eager to find some outlet for the energy and high spirits which most of its members possessed so abundantly. Many—perhaps the majority—spent the evening and a large part of the night in rioting, drinking, quarrelling, and fighting. The studious—and there were many, even among the gayest and most reckless, who had the true student's thirst for learning—pored over their notes of the lectures and practised themselves in subtle argument. Most of the students were poor, and many had to undertake some work to gain the means of support. They copied manuscripts, they made ballads and sold copies of them in the streets; they acted as servants in all sorts of capacities; we even read in the university annals of some who dug out the foundations of new buildings in the city. It was a hard life, but it had its joys of comradeship and intellectual satisfaction. The biographer of Richard de Wyche, Bishop of Chichester, tells us how, in his student days, Richard and two companions who

> lodged in the same chamber had only their tunics and one gown between them, and each of them a miserable pallet. When one therefore went out with the gown to hear a lecture the others sat in their room, and so they went forth alternately; and bread, with a little wine and pottage, sufficed for their food. For their poverty never suffered them to eat flesh or fish save on the Sunday or on some solemn holy day or in presence of companions or friends. Yet, he said, in all his days he had never after led so pleasant and delectable a life.

Roger's ambition kept him to his books even when his real love of learning gave way to weariness, but John made little pretence of study. He joined the most reckless and boisterous set of students, and spent his nights in revelling. From time to time he managed to drag Roger from his books into the midst of the merrymaking, and then, in a wild

reaction, the sober student threw off restraint and rioted with the best of them.

At the end of two years John tired of the sameness of Oxford life, and with a band of companions, reckless as himself, set off to make his way to Paris. But Roger stayed on, gaining gradually a great reputation for scholarship and ability, and at the end of eight years took his degree of Master of Arts. The recommendations of his teachers found for him a place in the household of the great Archbishop Becket, and there his advancement was rapid.

He took with him from the university no books save his collection of notes, and possibly copies of one or two elementary Latin texts. To own books was, in those days, the privilege of only the very rich, and even the university student read very little after his course was finished. Such was the life of a university student during the latter half of the twelfth century.

During the next hundred years Oxford gradually formed itself into an ordered and disciplined university. The students were gathered into hostels, over each of which one of their number was appointed official head, responsible for the good behaviour of the rest, and certain rules of conduct were laid down. Then in 1274 Walter de Merton founded and endowed the college of Merton, in connexion with his House of Scholars in Surrey, and his example was followed by other rich and enlightened people. By the end of the fourteenth century six more colleges had been established, and the university had definitely taken on the college constitution which it still retains. The sister-university of Cambridge, which was founded probably at about the same time as Oxford, developed on similar lines.

During the thirteenth century each university produced some remarkable scholars. They were known as Schoolmen, the general name given to those eminent in the study of philosophy all over Europe. They belonged to either the Dominican or the Franciscan Order, both of which had made settlements in Oxford and in Cambridge early in the century. The chief of the Oxford Schoolmen were Robert Grosseteste, Duns Scotus, William of Ockham, Roger Bacon, and John

Wyclif. All of them were men of great intellectual power, and the range of their study covered almost all that was known at the time of every branch of learning. Bacon attempted, unsuccessfully, to introduce into the university the study of natural science. Wyclif, who is known as the last of the Schoolmen, early turned his energies to practical matters of religion. The other three upheld each his own particular system of philosophy, and supported it by reference to the Scriptures, to the works of the Fathers of the Church, and to such texts of the Latin writers as were available. Commentary and gloss and argument increased and multiplied. The art of disputation was carried to a point at which the splitting of the finest hairs and the dissecting of the minutest grains became at once the delight and the serious occupation of the greatest intellects of the day.

To the ordinary student this meant an ever-increasing mass of dead matter through which he must laboriously make his way before he could arrive at the small living germ of true learning that lay beyond. The commentary became more important than the text. Scholasticism, as the system of the Schoolmen was called, had a deadening effect upon the intellectual life of England, though it trained men's minds to a marvellous acuteness and subtlety.

With Ockham, who died in 1349, the Scholastic system began to decline, though it lingered on for another two centuries, passing through various stages of decay, and falling into those trivialities and absurdities that have made its name a byword to later ages. " Philosophy," said Petrarch, writing toward the end of the fourteenth century,

> is so prostituted to the fancies of the vulgar that it aims only at hair-splitting on subtle distinctions and quibbles of words. . . . Truth is utterly lost sight of, sound practice is neglected, and the reality of things is despised. People concentrate their whole attention on empty words.

Until the introduction of printing it was still rare for a university student to possess any books save a grammar, a psalter, and one or two Latin texts. In the register kept by Bishop Stratford of Exeter from 1395–1419 the wills of sixty persons are recorded. All except eighteen of these are

dignitaries of the Church ; there are a dean, several archdeacons, canons, rectors, and vicars. The eighteen laymen are men of wealth and position. It is probable that all, or at least the great majority of these men, had had a university education. Yet they had between them only one hundred and thirty-eight books, and, taking out Church service-books, only sixty—an average of one apiece. Not one of them had more than fourteen, and fifteen of the laymen did not possess a single volume.

The students who in the fifteenth century filled the stately university buildings were very different from the crowd of vagabond youths who had gathered round the wandering teachers three hundred years before. Rich men now sent their sons to complete their education at Oxford or Cambridge almost as a matter of course, and many ways had been opened by which poor but able students could maintain themselves at either university in respectability and comfort. The poor and ambitious boy of this age did not start off for the university as on a romantic and forbidden adventure. He went probably by the help of one of the great public schools which had been established in many parts of England. For example, if he were Hampshire born he might have the good fortune to be a scholar of William of Wykeham's great foundation of Winchester. There, if he were an able lad, he might at the age of fourteen, or even earlier, be chosen among the " seventy poor indigent scholars, clerks " who were sent to the splendid college—New College, as it was called—which had been founded by Wykeham at Oxford. Here he would live under the charge of a warden, with a generous allowance for his expenses, and would bind himself to take priest's orders in a given time. If his school gave him no help he might attach himself to the Order of either the Dominicans or the Franciscans, both of which had colleges at Oxford and at Cambridge. If he did not wish to take orders he might try for a free place at Merton College, which aimed at training its students to become able men of affairs ; or he might arrange with the warden of any of the colleges to enter as a sizar—that is, a student who undertook certain menial offices in return for his board, lodging, and education.

Instead of grammar and rhetoric, theology and philosophy were now the chief subjects of study. The student's brain was exercised in subtle arguments, and his reasoning powers grew daily more acute. But while he was bringing fine-drawn arguments to bear on such questions as " What is the Universal ? " " In what does Individuality consist ? " " Can we be certain of anything ? " " Can we be certain we are certain of nothing ? " " What is the highest good ? " the higher powers of his intellect were neglected, and the finer spirit that should have inspired his work was dying out.

Then came news of a great revival of learning over the seas. Italy, it was said, had many scholars who had fled from Constantinople when that city had been taken by the Turks. They had brought with them the precious manuscripts that since the fall of Rome in 410 had been preserved in the library of the Eastern capital. All Italy was learning Greek, and flocking to the lectures in which these scholars were expounding the works of the ancient Greek writers.

The result was a marvellous intellectual awakening. Scholars from other countries poured into Italy, eager to share in this marvellous new learning. Grocyn, a Fellow of New College, went to learn Greek of the great teachers at Florence, and other Oxford men, notably Linacre and Colet, followed him. When they returned they lectured in Oxford on the new and wonderful works that had been opened to them, and the whole university crowded to listen. Grave Fellows who had gained their Master of Arts degree and young men just entering on their first term were equally anxious to learn this much-lauded Greek language.

Most important of all were the lectures of John Colet. He startled the whole university by announcing a series of lectures on the epistles of St Paul. In these he swept away the elaborate structure of comment and allegory which the Schoolmen had raised. Taking the simple Greek text, he expounded it as the Word of God conveying a plain message to His people, not as a mystical saying which required all the learning and all the subtlety of the acutest brains to decipher.

A new and glorious age seemed dawning for the universities.

CHAPTER XI

SONGS OF THE MIDDLE AGES

IT happened by a delightful chance, for which all of us should be grateful, that the earliest song our ancestors recorded and preserved for us was the fresh and lovely *Sumer is icumen in.*

It might so easily have been otherwise. This song might have been lost as so many others, we believe, were lost; or it might never have been written down at all, but might have died out before it reached its perfect form.

There is no other among those early songs, beautiful as many of them are, that has quite the same simple and direct appeal as this one or that strikes so clearly the note that has sounded through English lyric poetry from that day to our own. In most of them there is a little strangeness to be got over, a little tuning of the ear to be done, before we of this later age can take them entirely to ourselves. But as soon as we hear

> Sumer is icumen in,
> Lhude sing cuccu,

it is our own. A sense of fellowship with those far-away ancestors of ours comes to quicken our imagination, and the past is re-created before us.

We look back over the ages and see a sunny glade in a dark wood. Great trees with their scanty spring garment of tender green, blue skies, pink blossoming may, the gold and white of daisies in the grass, a grey church-tower beyond—just the homely countryside that was our fathers' and now is ours. On the sun-flecked turf the boys and girls are dancing—straight, upstanding lads and sturdy lasses, poorly clad, a trifle rough and awkward perhaps, but gay and active, and good to look at in their youth and freshness. They join hands and dance in a merry ring, now fast, now slow, with

a rhythmical swaying of bodies, swinging of arms, and stamping of feet. Then in a pause in the gay laughter and chatter comes a clear note from the wood—"Cuccu! Cuccu!" "Cuccu! Cuccu!" they repeat delightedly—you can hear the shrill sweetness of that call across the years. "Sumer is icumen in!" cries one of the merry group, and "Sumer is icumen in!" repeat the others gleefully; and round they go again, and again rises the blithe call, "Cuccu! Cuccu!"

Then they look about them, noting signs that confirm the glad news told by the cuckoo. They see how grass and leaves and flowers have covered the bare brownness of winter, how happy creatures in wood and pasture are feeding and frisking and calling to their young. The merry boys and girls vie with one another in proclaiming these evidences of summer, and each blithe shout is taken up by the whole company and turned into a sort of chant which is shaped and fitted to the dance; and there comes always the refrain, "Cuccu! Cuccu!" They sway and bend and turn to its cadences, still altering and improving, and at length they form it into a kind of song which they sing as they stroll happily homeward in the gathering dusk. Next time they come out to dance the song is remembered and sung again, and there is more shaping and altering, at the suggestion first of one and then of another. So the work of song-making goes on, spring-time after spring-time, many taking a hand in it. At length comes a wandering minstrel through the village, hears the song, and approves it; gives it with his practised skill a further trimming, shaping, and polishing; takes it on to the next village and the next, so that it spreads through a whole district.

Time passes, and at length the song is heard by some one who is at once a musician, a poet, and a scholar. In this case it is John of Fornsete, a monk at the monastery of Reading in Berkshire. He not only gives it its final shape, but he sets it to music; and he writes it down so that now it has a fixed form and is no longer subject to alteration. Soon copies of it are in the hands of many minstrels, and it becomes known all over the country. Everywhere, on

village greens and in forest glades, the boys and girls are singing:

Sumer is icumen in,
Lhude sing cuccu !
Groweth sed and bloweth med
And springth the wud nu—
Sing cuccu !

Ewe bleateth after lomb
Lhouth after calvè cu :
Bulluc sterteth, buck verteth,
Murie sing cuccu !

Cuccu, cuccu, wel singès thu, cuccu ;
Ne swike thu naver nu ;
Sing cuccu, nu ! sing, cuccu !
Sing cuccu ! sing cuccu nu.

Much of this is conjecture, and conjecture is very far from certainty. Yet there is good reason to believe that in some such way as this most of the songs of the early Middle Ages were made, though authorities differ as to the share which the minstrel or poet had in their making, some finding in the songs only the slightest traces of their origin among the people. Sometimes, it is probable, the making stopped halfway, and the song died before it reached completion. Often there failed the lucky chance that would have put it into written form, and it gradually faded from men's memories. The songs that have come down to us are, we believe, only a few stragglers from a great company, but we may well hope that they are of the choicest.

As we read one after another of these songs, with their alluring and suggestive refrains, vision and conjecture must arise.

Blou, northerne wynd,
Send thou me my swetynge,
Blou, northerne wynde, blou, blou, blou.

Was this made by a party of young men tramping across a heath, the wind in their faces, to meet their sweethearts in the next village at some country festival ?

Hey, hey, hey, hey,
I will have the whetstone an I may.

Did blithe workers in some barn sing this as they ground

the axes, and chopped the wood, and beat with their thick, wooden shoes upon the hard-trodden floor ?

As to this next one there can be no manner of doubt. We can almost see the topers in the village alehouse as they troll it out, keeping time with their mugs upon the rough table :

Bryng us in good ale, and bryng us in good ale,
For owr blyssyd Lady sake, bryng us in good ale.
Bryng us in no brown bred, for that is mad of brane,
Nor bryng us in no whyt bred, for therin is no gane,
But bryng us in good ale.
Bryng us in good ale, for that goes down at ones,
Bryng us in no bacon, for that is passyng fate,
But bryng us in good ale and gyfe ynough of that.
Bryng us in no egges, for there are many schelles,
But bryng us in good ale, and gife us nothing elles.

And so on.

There was another set of songs which belonged to various games played on the village greens and commons, and these songs were already very old when we first hear of them in England, though not as old as the games themselves. These had had their beginning hundreds, perhaps even thousands, of years before among the pagan peoples in the early ages of the world. Our forefathers of medieval times played a kind of football, with a whole village for each side ; and they played it so vigorously and roughly that broken heads and limbs and other injuries commonly resulted. But in pagan times the ball had been the head of the victim—an animal or perhaps a human being—that had been sacrificed in some savage religious rite, and the struggle had been fierce and deadly, between foes, not comrades. There were chasing games too, like our modern 'touch wood,' which were a survival of the pursuit of a wretched criminal fleeing to sanctuary. There was 'threading the needle,' which had originated in a processional dance round the boundaries of a settlement or village. "Oranges and Lemons" had begun as a ceremonial procession for the purpose of choosing a victim for the sacrifice ; and "Nuts in May" was a mimicry of the savage winning his bride by capture ; and so with many others. Each of these had had its own wild chant, but as the original religious purpose was forgotten the song

changed, retaining only traces of its earlier form, such as "Here comes a chopper to chop off your head," in "Oranges and Lemons."

Old games are good, and the medieval lads and lasses played those which had come down to them from their forefathers with great enjoyment; but they made up new games for themselves also, as lads and lasses have done in all ages. Many of the songs that have survived show very plainly that they were once sung by players in a game, but we are left to guess what the game was. Take, for example, the song of the holly and the ivy that was sung at Christmas-time, in which the boys took the part of the holly and the girls the ivy:

Here commys holly that is so gent,
To please all men is his intent.
Holly and his mery men they can daunce in hall;
Ivie and her gentyl women cannot daunce at all.
But like a meyney [1] of bullocks in a waterfall,
Or on a hot somer's day when they be mad all.
Holly stond in the halle fayre to behold,
Ivy stond wythout the dore, she ys sore a-cold,
Holly and hys mery men they dawnsyn and they syng.
Ivy and her maydenys they wepyn and they wryng.

It is not difficult to imagine the action that might have accompanied this song, and to see the merry struggle between holly and ivy that made part of the revels of Christmas.

Christmas was a great time for the making of songs. The Christmas carol came to England from France, but the people quickly made it a real English possession by producing many carols of their own. All the old ceremonies of the Christmas feast came in time to have their own special carol. When the boar's head was borne into the great hall it was accompanied by the song:

The bore's head in hand I bringe,
Caput apri defero.
With garlondes gay and birdes singinge.
I pray you all helpe me to sing
Qui estis in convivio.

[1] herd or company.

The bore's head I understande
Is the chief servyce in this lande,
Loke where ever it be fande,
Servite cum cantico.

In the services of the Church carols of a more spiritual type were sung, and these were usually produced in the monasteries. They were sung by the priest or the choir, and the people joined in the refrain, which was usually in Latin.

There were besides love-songs, political songs, ballads, hymns, and many other varieties, all of which our forefathers sang with zest and which served them until the new poetry came in, in the great days of the Tudors.

CHAPTER XII

MORALS AND INTERLUDES

IF we, like the favoured modern whose experiences were recorded in Chapter VI, could have been present at Chester on that Whit Monday of 1455 we might have been inclined to consider those medieval people a trifle dull and stupid. Why, loving dramatic representations as they so evidently did, could they not manage to provide for themselves better and more bountiful fare? Why were they content to wait a whole year before they had a chance of enjoying such a treat again? Why must it be, year after year, the same play acted in the same fashion? Why did they not have frequent shorter, less cumbersome performances and some variety of subject? If the amateurs of the town found the undertaking too arduous and troublesome, why did they not appoint special people for the work? And, finally, why did they not provide a proper place for the performance, where it might be enjoyed comfortably, in favourable or unfavourable weather?

To us, looking backward along the road that the drama has travelled, short cuts to all these improvements seem easy and obvious; but the men of the Middle Ages, groping their way forward through an unknown country, and able to see but a little way ahead, took the path that opened out before them, however winding it might prove to be. Yet, though their progress was slow, in time they reached and passed all those landmarks which we see so clearly.

They had, in fact, made some progress even before that Whitsun performance of 1455. They had introduced into the miracle plays characters which were not to be found in the Scripture narrative, but which represented such abstractions as Sin, Death, Righteousness, Mercy, Truth. They had developed the humorous element, and a new comic character known as the Vice, a sort of attendant on the

Devil, had gained great popularity. The number of plays acted was increasing year by year, short performances being given to celebrate special festivals.

All through the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries this progress continued ; and if in imagination we join ourselves to the audiences that witnessed certain of the performances given between the days of Henry VI and the accession of Elizabeth we shall be able to gain some idea of the steps by which the drama gradually advanced from the miracle plays to the plays of Shakespeare.

We will visit first a Suffolk village in the year 1450. It is a large village, as villages go in the fifteenth century, with a fine church, a few substantial farms, and some scattered groups of cottages—which we to-day should be more inclined to call hovels. There is an alehouse and a forge and a mill on the hillside near by. Most of the villagers are very poor, peasants drudging on the land all day, with little gaiety in their lives save the rustic revels on May Day and at Christmas-tide, the sports and dancing on the village green, and the occasional visit of a travelling minstrel ; so that there is great excitement when, one summer morning, there ride in two horsemen, dressed as heralds and bearing flags. The people come running out of the houses and off the fields, and as soon as there is a large enough gathering the two horsemen begin their harangue. It is in verse, and they speak it alternately. First they offer to the King and his nobles their homage and good wishes, then they greet " the good commons of this place." Next comes their announcement that a company of players intend to visit the village and perform a play called *The Castell of Perseverance*, representing the struggle of good and bad angels for the soul of man. They give an outline of the play, and conclude:

> These percell in propyrtes we spose us to playe,
> This day sevenenyt before you in sith,
> At N—— on the grene in ryal array.
> So haste you then thitherward, syris, heudly in hyth.[1]
> All good neighbours ful specially we you pray,
> And look that you be there betyme lufly and lyth,[2]
> For we shall be onwerd the underne of the day.[3]

[1] very courteously. [2] lovely and gentle. [3] 9 A.M.

Here is stirring news for the village! Even the travelled folk, those who have been as far as the nearest town, have only seen the ordinary miracle, never a play like this, which does not appear to be in the Bible at all, but sounds like an entirely fresh-made production. There is wise talk in the village alehouse and at gatherings on the green; but no one seems to know very much about what is to be expected, and curiosity and eagerness rise high. A day or two before the "sevenenyt" is over comes a heavy wagon, loaded with wood and other matters, with workmen sitting on the top; and these workmen proceed to mark out on the green, with wooden stakes, a great double circle, with space enough between the outer and the inner for a trench or moat. On the outer circle they set up five great scaffolds, south, west, north, east, and north-east; and in the middle of the inner circle they erect a curious battlemented structure—the Castell of Perseverance, no doubt.

The children can scarcely be kept away from the place, and the grown folk are little better. When the great day arrives there is no need to urge any to hasten, for long before "the underne of the day" the whole population of the village, save the sick and such as can by no means contrive to leave their work, is assembled. The company arrives—probably a band of minstrels who, seeing their old calling falling into decay, have moved with the times and become actors.

Five imposing figures mount the five scaffolds. They represent the World, the Flesh, the Devil, Covetousness, and —on the scaffold facing the east—God the Father. The other actors take their places within the smaller circle. Humanum Genus, or Man, is represented as a child, naked and helpless; the Good Angel and the Bad Angel struggle together for his soul. The Good Angel is temporarily defeated, and goes away to summon Confessio, or Schryfte, and Penitencia. With the help of these two the Bad Angel is driven back, and Man is lodged in the Castell of Perseverance, the lower part of which opens to show a bed, upon which he is laid. The Bad Angel gathers his forces, including Belial and the Seven Deadly Sins, and besieges the castle. The Seven Virtues come to aid Humanum Genus, who appears

now as a full-grown man. They drive back the foe with roses, the emblems of the Passion of Our Lord. This part of the play interests the audience mightily, for the wars with France have made all of them familiar with the idea of sieges, and the Castell of Perseverance is, they are told, " strenger thanne any in France." Belial makes great play here, for he has, according to the stage directions, " gunne-powder brennyng in pipes in his hands and in his ears "—probably a sort of squib is meant which would make satisfactorily terrifying explosions—and he rages and roars as medieval devils always do. But in spite of Belial the forces of evil are driven back, and Man is left to live in peace and holiness in the Castell, where the Good Angel, assisted by " Mercy in whyte, Ryhtwysnesse in red altogedyr, Trewthe in sad grene, and Pes[1] al in blake," ministers to him. The Bad Angel does not give up, but waits until Man is grown old, then sends Avarice to tempt him ; and, after a long resistance, Man succumbs. He receives from Avarice a great treasure, which he hides in the ground, but Death comes and bears away his spirit, so that he must leave the wealth for which he has sinned. He is brought before God the Father for judgment, and is condemned, but by the pleading of Misericordia, and her appeal to Christ's Passion, he receives forgiveness and salvation.

It is all over by dinner-time, and the delighted members of the audience, having made their offerings, in money or in kind, hurry back to their work, except the children and the old people, who linger to watch the taking down of the scaffolds and the loading up of the wagon.

So far had the Englishman advanced by the middle of the fifteenth century, and for the next hundred years or so such plays continued to delight him. They were called " moral plays," or morals, and were intended for edification as well as for amusement. Before the end of the century a number of acting companies had been formed, made up for the most part of minstrels and wandering scholars. These, in order that they might not be liable to the penalties which the law imposed on roving vagabonds, usually put themselves under

[1] Peace.

the protection of a noble or other person of importance, and were called by his name. They wandered over the country, from town to town and from village to village, playing sometimes on the village green, sometimes in the hall of a great house. When they came to a town it was their custom to go first to the mayor and aldermen and ask permission to act their play in the civic hall before a specially selected audience of the town authorities ; and if these approved it was repeated once, or perhaps several times, for the general public.

Most of the plays showed man's journey through life to death, and the various powers of good and evil which helped or hindered him in his efforts to find salvation. The most famous of all the morals is *Everyman*, which has been acted in our own day, and has been proved to possess charm and beauty even for a twentieth-century audience.

All classes of Englishmen, from the king to the peasant, at first delighted in the morals, but the higher classes wearied of them first. They, unlike their poorer countrymen, had other ways of amusing themselves, and they did not willingly submit to being bored ; for it must be allowed that some of the morals were terribly long drawn out and tedious. The art of disputation was, during the Middle Ages, very highly esteemed ; boys at school and students at the universities spent most of their time in learning to argue, and to uphold a thesis against opponents. It is not surprising, therefore, to find that in many of the morality plays long theological arguments were introduced, in which two characters disputed with great skill, and these at first were apparently listened to with attention and enjoyment. But as time went on, and the medieval theories of learning gave way to the newer ideas of the Renaissance, the disputations went out of fashion. It is recorded that when a moral called *The Fynding of Troth* was acted before Henry VIII and Catherine of Aragon at the Christmas revels of 1513 the King found the performance so long and tedious that " he got up and departyd to hys chambre."

But on the people at large the moral still kept its hold, and they listened with respectful attention even to the

interminable arguments that so unkindly delayed the action of the play, though their greatest applause was given to the comic parts, and especially to the characters of the Devil and the Vice. Gossip Tattle in Ben Jonson's play *The Staple of News*, says :

> My husband, Timothy Tattle, God rest his poor soul ! was wont to say there was no play without a fool and a Devil in it ; he was for the Devil still, God bless him ! The Devil for his money, would he say, he would fain see the Devil.

The fool was the old Vice of the miracle plays, who had been developed as a comic character and, under various names, had a part in almost every play. His part was to speak merry quips and jests, gibing at the other characters and especially at the Devil ; and sometimes at the end of the play

> the nimble Vice would skip up like a jack-on-apes into the Devil's neck and ride the Devil a course and belabour him with his wooden dagger, till he made him roar, whereat the people would laugh to see the Devil so vice-haunted.

Morals were still being performed well into the second half of the sixteenth century, for somewhere about the year 1570 there came a company of actors to the city of Gloucester, and gave a performance before the Mayor, the Aldermen, and common council ; which play so impressed one little boy in the audience that he remembered it and wrote about it many years afterward, when he was growing to be an old man. He says :

> My father took me with him, and made me stand between his legs, as he sat upon one of the benches, where we saw and heard very well. The play was called *The Cradle of Security*, wherein was personated a king or some great prince with his courtiers of several kinds, amongst which three ladies were in special grace with him ; and they keeping him in delights and pleasures, drew him from his graver counsellors, hearing of sermons, and listening to good counsels and admonitions, that in the end they got him to lie down in a cradle upon the stage, where these three ladies joining in a sweet song, rocked him asleep, that he snorted again, and in the meantime closely conveyed under the cloths wherewithal he was covered a vizard like a swine's snout upon his face, with

> three wire chains fastened hereunto, the other end whereof being holden severally by those three ladies, who fall to singing again, and then discovered his face, that the spectators might see how they had transformed him, going on with their singing. Whilst all this was acting, there came forth of another door at the farthest end of the stage two old men, the one in blue, with a serjeant-at-arms his mace on his shoulder, the other in red with a drawn sword in his hand, and leaning with the other hand upon the other's shoulder; and so they two went along in a soft pace round about by the skirt of the stage, till at last they came to the cradle, when all the Court was in the greatest jollity; and then the foremost old man with his mace stroke a fearful blow upon the cradle; whereat all the courtiers, with the three ladies and the vizard, all vanished; and the desolate prince starting up bare-faced, and finding himself thus sent for to judgment, made a lamentable complaint of his miserable case, and so was carried away by wicked spirits. This prince did personate in the moral the wicked of the world; the three ladies Pride, Covetousness, and Luxury; the two old men the end of the world and the last judgment. This sight took such impression on me, that when I came towards man's estate it was as fresh in my memory as if I had seen it newly acted.

This little boy, whose name was Robert Willis, was born at Gloucester in the same year as William Shakespeare was born at Stratford-on-Avon. Two companies of players visited Stratford during 1568, as the civic records testify, and John Shakespeare, father of William, being that year bailiff of the town, gave them an official welcome. It is perhaps improbable that the little four-year-old boy saw anything of these performances, but it is almost certain that he saw other similar ones at a later date.

Most of the travelling companies were quite small—an ordinary one consisted of four or five men and a boy—and although there was much ingenious doubling of parts such companies could not play morals like *The Castell of Perseverance,* which required thirty-five performers. The plays therefore tended to become shorter and simpler, and such as could be performed without previous preparation of scenery. We will look on while one of these companies does its best to please the audience gathered in the hall of Sir Thomas More's house at Chelsea, somewhere about the year 1530.

A Company of Strolling Players

In the background is Smithfield Market, with a platform stage and a play in progress.

From an old print published in 1676

A messenger has arrived that morning to say that the Lord Mayor, the Aldermen, and their wives purpose to pay Sir Thomas a visit. At once there is a great stir and bustle of preparation. "Give great charge," commands the hospitable master of the house, "our diet be made dainty for the table."

> For of all people that the earth affords,
> The Londoners fare richest at their boards.

His wife, Dame Alice, her three daughters, Meg and Bess and Daisy, his son-in-law William Roper, and a small band of servants are all working eagerly under his direction. Roper must order the banquet, Dame Alice must see to the arrangements for receiving and seating the ladies. "For the Lord Mayor, his brethren, and the rest," says Sir Thomas, "leave me alone." Then comes in a servant with a message :

> "There's one without that stays to speak with ye,
> And bade me tell ye that he is a player."

"Bring him in," orders the busy master, without pausing in his preparations. "Now, stir there, fellows," he cries ; "fie, you are too slow. See that your lights be in readiness."

There enters the band of players, and Sir Thomas turns to them with the happy courtesy that makes all men love him. "My Lord Cardinal's players," he cries,

> "You happen hither in a lucky time,
> To have a play before the banquet will be excellent.
> I prythee tell me what plays have ye."

"Divers, my lord," answers the leader of the band. "*The Cradle of Security, Hit Nail o' th' Head, Impatient Poverty, The Play of the Four P's, Lazarus and Dives, Lusty Juvenal, The Marriage of Wit and Wisdom*——"

"*The Marriage of Wit and Wisdom*" ! cries Sir Thomas. "That, my lads. I'll none but that. How many are ye ? "

"Four men and a boy, sir."

"But one boy ? Then I see there's but few women in the play," comments More.

"Three, my lord," answers the player. "Dame Science, Lady Vanity, and Wisdom she herself."

" And one boy play them all ? " says the master. " Well, get ye straight together, and make ye ready with all haste ye may."

Music sounds from without. The Lord Mayor and the Aldermen, the Lady Mayoress and her ladies, all richly attired, enter, escorted by servants carrying torches. When the greetings are over and all are seated Sir Thomas calls for the play.

" We would desire your Honour but to stay a little," beseeches the leading player. " One of my fellows is but run to Oagle's for a long beard for young Wit, and he'll be here presently."

Smilingly Sir Thomas agrees to wait, explaining to his guests that Wit lacks a beard. He beguiles the time by chatting with the players.

" And what part playest thou ? " he asks one of them.

" Inclination, the Vice, my lord," is the answer, and the company laugh and applaud, for the Vice is always a favourite.

At length the leader gives the signal for the play to begin. The beard which is to give dignity to young Wit will surely arrive before the Prologue is finished ; meanwhile he must do without it. The Prologue is in the form of a song sung by Wit and Inclination.

> In an arbour green, asleep whereas I lay,
> The birds sang sweetly in the midst of the day,
> I dreamed fast of mirth and play,
> In youth is pleasure, in youth is pleasure.

So they go on, very tunefully to the end, with much applause from the audience. Then Inclination recommends Lady Wisdom as a wife for Wit, and says that she will soon be passing that way. Wit is delighted, and eagerly awaits her coming. There enters Lady Vanity, whom Wit believes to be the lady he is expecting. He begins to pay his court to her, and she accepts his advances kindly.

But here a hitch occurs. " Is Luggins come yet with the beard ? " inquires Inclination anxiously of his leader.

" I' faith he is not come," is the answer. " Alas ! what shall we do ? " The case must be explained to Sir Thomas.

"Forsooth, we can go no further till our fellow Luggins come; for he plays Good Counsel, and now he should enter and admonish Wit that this is Lady Vanity, not Lady Wisdom."

Sir Thomas laughingly makes light of the difficulty. "I will e'en play Good Counsel myself," says he, and from his place in the audience he puts in an improvised version of Good Counsel's part until the missing player arrives, and the performance can proceed in regular form.

But these delays have used up the available time, and the banquet is announced before the play is ended. Sir Thomas courteously dismisses the players with a gift of ten angels, and they go off to the supper prepared for them, singing his praises.

But the professional players were not the only actors of the time; they were not even the most important, if the test of importance is to be the influence on the development of the drama. Bands of amateur actors were to be found everywhere. In schools the acting of plays became an important part of the boys' training. At the universities it was so highly regarded that those who refused to act or to be present at the plays were fined. The lawyers of the Inns of Court, when they gave one of their great entertainments, acted a play, usually with great magnificence of dresses and scenery. At the Court of Henry VIII gentlemen and ladies of the highest rank were eager to take part in plays given before the King, and those who did well were highly praised and greatly envied. Sir Thomas More in his youth, so his son-in-law tells us,

> when he lived in the house of the right reverend wise and learned prelate Cardinal Morton . . . would at Christmastide suddenly sometimes step in among the players, and never studying for the matter, make a part of his own there presently among them, which made the lookers-on more sport than all the players beside.

It is clear that for the purposes of these amateur actors the old morals were quite unsuitable. Something was wanted that was short and merry, that could be acted as part of an evening's entertainment, and could keep an

educated, critical audience interested and amused. Gradually the playwrights evolved what was required. They took old classical stories and legends and made them into plays. They used popular tales, such as *Patient Griselda, Robert of Sicily,* and Æsop's *Fables* ; or sometimes they founded a play on an incident or event of their own time. They crammed their production full of quips and jests and episodes ; and they called it an interlude. The name (*inter,* " between," and *ludus,* " a play ") may have been given either because the plays were acted between one portion of the festivities and the next or because the action took place between two or more persons. Henry VIII, although he refused to sit out a performance of *Troth,* delighted in the interludes. He built for himself " a great chamber of disguisings " in the tilt-yard at Greenwich, and had it decorated by Hans Holbein ; and to this chamber he summoned the various bands of players that they might act before him. In 1527 he gave a great banquet to the ambassadors from France, and called upon the boys of St Paul's School to provide a play for the evening's entertainment. They came, about thirty of them, with their High Master, John Ritwise, in six boats down the Thames. A magnificent banquet was served in the King's hall, where a fountain of perfumes played, and when it was over the company took their seats for the play. There was the young King, stalwart and handsome, and the stately, gracious Queen Catherine with her ladies, among whom was fair-haired, lovely Anne Boleyn. There were the eight ambassadors with their splendid train. There was the great Cardinal Wolsey, with a train even more numerous and more magnificent.

Before all these great personages the boys played " a manner of tragedy, in the Latin tongue, the effect of which was that the Pope was in captivity and the Church underfoot." It was probably written by John Ritwise, and was directed against Luther and his teaching, while it contained some gross flattery of the all-powerful Cardinal. It seems to have been a sort of hybrid, a mixture of the old moral and the newer interlude, with a strong political element. The characters included

an orator, a poet, Religion, Ecclesia, Veritas, Heresy, False Interpretation, Corruptio, Scriptoria, St Peter, St Paul, St James, a Cardinal, two Serjeants, the Dauphin and his brother, a messenger, three Almeyns, Lady Pees, Lady Quyetnes, Dame Tranquylyte, Luther, and his wife.

Luther was dressed " like a party friar in russet damask and black taffety," Luther's wife " like a frow of Spiers in Almayn in red silk," St Peter, St Paul, and St James wore " habits of white sarsnet, red mantles with lace of silver and damask and pelisses of scarlet."

We are not told what the audience thought of this play, but probably it pleased them, for the reputation of the St Paul's boys as players rose higher and higher. We hear of their performing several plays, made by their master out of the works of Latin authors, before Cardinal Wolsey, and in 1552 Westacott, who was then " scolemaster of Powles," brought his boys to Hatfield to play before Princess Elizabeth. The boys of other public schools in all parts of the country gave similar performances, and it was probably because these were very successful that bands of boy actors were formed, principally from the song schools of St Paul's Cathedral and the Chapel Royal.

One of the most famous of these bands of boy actors was that formed and taught by John Heywood, a very popular writer of interludes. Heywood took his boys to perform before Princess Mary and in the halls of many of the great nobles, and they may have given public performances also. We will look in on one of these when the boys are playing, *The Wether : A New and very Mery Interlude of All Maner Wethers.*

The list of characters shows at once that the interlude has moved very far from the old moral. It gives

JUPITER, a god.
MERYREPORTE, the Vyce.
THE GENTYLMAN.
THE MARCHAUNT.
THE RANGER.
THE WATER MYLLER.
THE GENTYLWOMAN.
THE LAUNDER.
A BOY, the lest that can play.

The play opens with Jupiter sitting upon his throne, and making a lordly speech concerning the petitioners who are coming to him to beg him to grant such weather as may be favourable to them. Then Meryreporte enters. "Why, what art thou that approches so ny?" demands Jupiter, and the Vice answers, "Forsothe and plese your lordshippe it is I." "All that we know very well," replies the god. "But what I?"

> "What I? Some saye I am I perse I,
> But what maner I soever be I,
> I assure your good lordshippe I am I."

After some more of Meryreporte's wit the petitioners are brought in one by one, and each asks for the particular kind of weather which will suit his circumstances. Last of all comes "lyttell Dicke," who has been sent by his playfellows to beg for snow in order that they may be able to enjoy a game of snowballing. To each one Jupiter makes answer that his case shall be considered, and each goes out, thanking him for his graciousness. Then comes Meryreporte's comment,

> "Lo! how this is brought to pas!
> Syr, now shall ye have the wether even as it was."

The play is slight, but it shows a distinct advance. Abstractions have been got rid of, and ordinary people have taken their places. There was not much farther to go before a real drama should be placed before the people.

CHAPTER XIII

THE BIBLE

> I wish that even the weakest woman might read the Gospels, and the Epistles of St Paul. I wish that they were translated into all languages, so as to be read and understood not only by Scots and Irishmen, but even by Saracens and Turks. But the first step to their being read is to make them intelligible to the reader. I long for the day when the husbandman shall sing portions of them to himself as he follows the plough, when the weaver shall hum them to the time of his shuttle, when the traveller shall wile away with their stories the weariness of his journey.

ERASMUS, the famous Dutch scholar, wrote these words in the preface to his edition of the Greek Testament, issued in 1534. They express a hope rather than an expectation; the vision before the speaker's eyes is clear, but so far off that there seems little hope of reaching it. To us the aspiration does not sound extravagant; it points to a state of things that later did actually exist. But in those early years of the sixteenth century Erasmus ran the risk of being charged with heresy for even expressing it.

The Bible was not, indeed, utterly unknown among the people. They knew something of it through the services of the Church, the teaching of the priests, from rare sermons, from hymns and poems. The miracle plays which to a former generation had been the great means of Scripture-teaching had almost died out; but Biblical plays of various kinds were still being performed up and down the country. There were some Englishmen—fervent believers in the doctrines of the Reformation—who had secretly read parts of the Bible for themselves. Copies of the New Testament, translated by William Tyndall, had been brought over to England in large numbers and distributed by a secret society known as the Christian Brethren, which was especially active in East Anglia and in London. But to possess a Bible of

one's own was to run the risk of prosecution, imprisonment, and even death, and only the devoted few were willing to pay such a price. As a common possession of the people, a book to be read and studied and discussed, the Bible did not exist.

It came into being when, in 1538, Henry VIII ordered that a Bible should be placed in every cathedral and church. Every parish priest was ordered

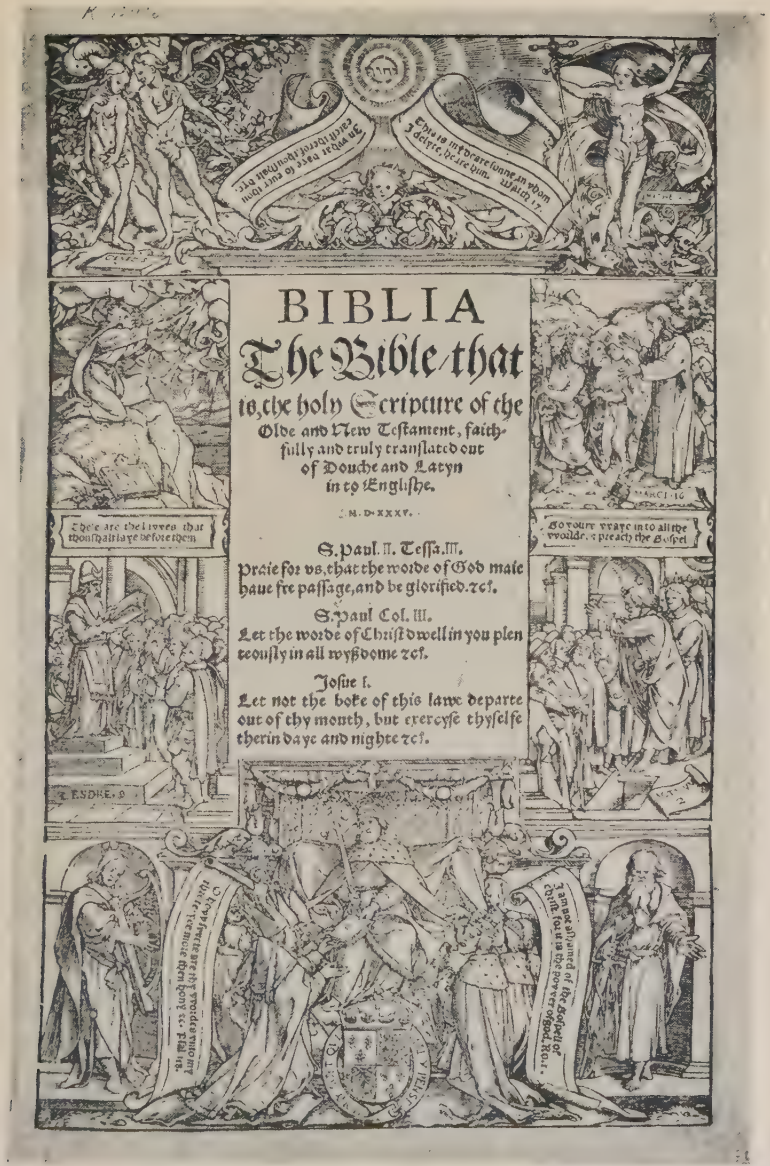
> to provide one book of the Bible of the largest volume, in English, and have the same set up in some convenient place whereat the parishioners may most commodiously resort to the same, and read it.

The clergy were bidden

> to discourage no man privily or openly from reading the same Bible, but expressly provoke, stir and exhort every person to read the same, as that which is the very lively word of God.

So the great Bibles, chained to the desks that none might wickedly or mischievously remove them, appeared in one church after another throughout the kingdom. The people came curiously to look at them, a little awed at first and scarcely daring to make free with a volume which they and their fathers before them had been content to believe too holy and mysterious to be rendered into the common tongue or to be read by the common folk. Yet here it was, done into plain English, and his Majesty King Henry had commanded all loyal subjects to read it. So they took courage and fingered the heavy clasps ; gazed at the curious frontispiece where they recognized the figures of the King, Archbishop Cranmer, and Thomas Cromwell, the Chancellor ; and spelled out slowly and with difficulty here and there a verse in the heavy black-letter type.

Sometimes there came one who could read fluently, and then the rest eagerly listened, beseeching him to go on and on and to come again at another time to continue the story. At St Paul's Cathedral, where Bonner, Bishop of London, had placed six Bibles, there was one, John Porter, who used sometimes to be occupied in that godly exercise. " This Porter," we are told, " was a fresh young man, and of a big


BIBLIA
The Bible/that
is,the holy Scripture of the
Olde and New Teſtament, faith-
fully and truly tranſlated out
of Douche and Latyn
in to Engliſhe.
M.D.XXXV.
S.Paul.II.Teſſa.III.
Praie for vs,that the worde of God maie
haue fre paſſage,and be glorified.&c.
S.Paul Col. III.
Let the worde of Chriſt dwell in you plen
teouſly in all wyſdome &c.
Joſue I.
Let not the boke of this lawe departe
out of thy mouth, but exerceyſe thyſelfe
therin daye and nighte &c.
Goo youre waye into all the
worlde, & preache the Goſpel
These are the Lyuers that
thou ſhalt haue before them

Title-page of the First Printed English Bible

Edited and, as regards the parts not already rendered by Tyndall, translated by Miles Coverdale. Probably printed at Zurich.

British Museum

stature ; and great multitudes would resort thither to hear him, because he could read well and had an audible voice."

Thus in St Paul's Cathedral and in all the other cathedrals and churches throughout the land the quiet aisles were filled, as evening drew on, with a company of eager people. Craftsmen and shopkeepers, farmers and labourers, they came as soon as their work was done, with their wives and their children, and all listened intently to the one who, standing by the lectern, read from the great book that lay upon it. There was something there for each one of them, for it was in truth not a single book, but the whole literature of a nation. Stories new and entrancing, histories, biographies, travels, sermons, love-poems, battle-songs, dirges—all came in their turn. We who live in a book-filled world cannot know the deep, satisfying delight that came with those evening readings. No sympathetic effort of ours will put us in the place of those men and women who now for the first time had their fill of the joy that literature can give, but if we remind ourselves of what books these unlettered subjects of King Henry VIII already possessed our imaginations may be quickened. They had Chaucer—but Chaucer had already fallen out of fashion, and his language had almost as many difficulties for the uneducated man or woman of Tudor times as it has for the uneducated man or woman of to-day. They had a store of old romances in verse and prose, including Malory's *Morte d'Arthur* ; they had a few books of travel—Sir John Mandeville's and Marco Polo's—and these were great favourites ; they had homilies, sermons, and works of devotion, and a stock of poems and ballads, most of which they knew by heart.

To a generation that had been scantily fed on this thin food came the abounding plenty of the Bible. They did not, it would seem, value it for its religious teaching only. Religion they had had in plenty ; the life of the Middle Ages was built upon the idea of religion. Teachers they had had, all of whom claimed infallibility, and until these last few years, when, by the act and deed of that most puissant king, Henry VIII, the new heresy had been turned into the new faith, that claim of infallibility had by the great mass

of the people been conceded with more or less enthusiasm. Soon came the time when the Scriptures were mainly valued as the foundation of doctrine ; but just at first it was the sheer wonder and beauty of it all that gained the hearts of the common folk. Here was interest and delight and marvel ; here were words that pictured, words that sang, words that thrilled ; they had not dreamed so much could be done by mere words.

Boys and girls listened with ecstasy to the stories of the heroes of the Old Testament—David and Elijah, Samson and Gideon. Men and women who had tired of the monotonous unreality of the old romances found a freshness of delight in the homely, human stories of Abraham and Isaac, of Mary and Joseph and the Child Jesus in the carpenter's shop at Nazareth. Lovers thrilled to hear how Jacob served twice seven years for Rachel ; the adventurous followed St Paul with breathless interest through his perils by land and perils by waters. And all the hearers, belonging as they did to a music-loving generation, who knew the old songs by heart and were beginning to make new songs for themselves, listened with rapture to the full and lovely cadences of the Psalms, the enchanting melody of Solomon's Song, the sublime poetry of the Prophets. Truly John Porter and his like did a good work when they opened such joys as these to their fellows.

Many among the richer folk bought Bibles and took them to their homes to read, for this also the King's clemency allowed. Great men had magnificent copies, richly bound and beautifully printed on vellum, like that of Thomas Cromwell preserved in the library of St John's, Cambridge. The Bible was read and reread until many passages were known by heart, and its language passed into the familiar speech of the people. Throughout the literature of that and succeeding generations its influence can be very plainly seen, not only in serious works, but in plays and poems and stories. Even the most dissolute playwrights of the Elizabethan age knew their Bible.

Fifteen years after Henry had caused the Great Bible to be placed in the churches came Queen Mary's accession and

the attempt to restore Romanism, and then it was seen how strong a hold on the hearts and consciences of the people the teaching of the Bible had gained. It was still read—widely, eagerly, devoutly—but it was read not as literature, but as the Word of God, for which a man was willing to give his life.

The five unhappy years of Mary's reign passed, and Elizabeth succeeded her on the throne. The Bible was given again its place of honour. As the Queen entered London she was "in Cheape Side presented with the holy Bible in English, which she reverently kissed and thankefully received, as hir Spirituall comfort, her temporall crosse and godly counsellor." If she was not quite sincere in these protestations she recognized at least that this was the view most acceptable to her subjects, and she took care to encourage the reading of the Bible in the most public manner possible. William Harrison, who during a great part of Elizabeth's reign was rector of Radwinter in Essex, wrote a long and detailed *Description of England*, and in it he several times praises the Queen for the regard which she showed for the Holy Scriptures. He says:

> To avoid idleness and prevent sundry transgressions otherwise likely to be committed and done, such order is taken that every office hath either a Bible or the Books of the Acts and Monuments of the Church of England, or both, besides some histories and chronicles lying therein, for the exercise of such as come into the same; whereby the stranger that entereth the Court of England upon the sudden shall rather imagine himself to come into some public school of the universities, where many give ear to one that readeth, than unto a prince's palace; if you compare the same with those of other nations. Would to God all honourable personages would take example of her Grace's godly dealing in this behalf, and show their conformity unto these her so good beginnings.

Harrison tells us too how some godly Elizabethan ladies spent their time in "the continual reading of the Holy Scriptures," and how children read them daily and learnt long passages by heart. In one of the popular dialogues of the time, used in schools, we read:

> MISTRESS. John, is the children's table covered?
> JOHN. Not yet, mistress.

MISTRESS. Bryng their round table, and make them dine there at the board's end; read a chapter or two of the New Testament whilst they make ready your table.

BOY. Father, where shall I reade?

FATHER. Wher you left yesterday at the seconde of St John.

[*The boy reads.*

FATHER. Ther is a fayre chapter, truly. God give us grace to do the contence thereof.

One of the most striking instances of the way in which the Elizabethans drew inspiration from their Bibles is the case of Richard Hakluyt, who wrote the famous book of *Principall Navigations*. He tells us in the introduction to this book that "being a youth and one of her Majesty's scholars at Westminster," he went one day to visit his cousin, a Gentleman of the Middle Temple, "at a time when I found lying open upon his boord certeine books of Cosmographie, with an Universelle map." After they had looked at these

> he brought me to the Bible, and turning to the 107th Psalm directed me to the 23rd and 24th verses, where I read that "they that go down to the sea in ships, that do business in great waters, these see the works of the Lord and his wonders in the deep." Which words of the Prophet, together with my cousin's discourse (things of high and rare delight to my young nature) tooke in me so deepe an impression that I constantly resolved, if ever I were preferred to the university, where better time and more convenient place might be ministered for these studies, I would by God's assistance prosecute that knowledge and kind of literature, the doors whereof (after a sort) were so happily opened before me.

Later other translations superseded Henry's Great Bible—the Geneva version, which was favoured by the Puritans, and the Authorized Version, which has had the greatest influence of all upon our language, having been in familiar use from the time of James I to our own day. There is no other book which Englishmen know so well; it is the great book of our race.

CHAPTER XIV

A SERMON AT PAUL'S CROSS

PREACHING came into fashion with the Reformation. The Church of the later Middle Ages had laid small stress on sermons, and had only occasionally given them a place in the service. Such as were preached were little more than exhortations to the people to submit to the discipline of the Church and make the offerings that she required.

In the early years of the sixteenth century there were signs of a change. Dean Colet led the way in London by a weekly sermon at St Paul's, and Fisher, Bishop of Rochester, preached regularly in the parishes of his diocese. But it was not until the Church of England had separated itself from Rome that the sermon took a real and important place in the life of the country. Then the reformers were free to set forward their doctrines and expose the alleged errors of the Church of Rome, and they did both these things with vigour. All over England priests who were burning with zeal for the Protestant religion preached many and lengthy sermons, and men and women crowded to hear them; for the desire for free and open discussion of religious matters was as strong in many laymen as in the clergy themselves.

As time went on and men grew to accept Protestantism as the normal and settled state of things controversy to some extent died out, and new elements came to take its place. A rapid and remarkable development gave the sermon a characteristic form which had a distinct literary value. The preacher dealt with questions of the day, denounced abuses, justified or condemned the actions of persons set in authority, advocated certain political measures; and he learned how at the same time to instruct, interest, and even entertain his congregation.

By the end of the reign of Henry VIII the "preaching"

had become one of the events of the week in nearly all large towns. Men and women crowded to it, not simply because of their zeal for religion, but for the same reasons that to-day they seize upon newspapers and magazines—books of the moment. They wanted to find out what was going on in the country, and to hear what some one else had to say about it, to argue and discuss, to be told anecdotes and jokes and quips, to see a little farther out into the world than they were able to do every day. Not all the preachers could do these things for them, but those who could, though it were only imperfectly, quickly became famous, and wherever they preached an eager crowd gathered to hear them.

Such a crowd was gathering in the churchyard of St Paul's Cathedral on a certain Friday in the year 1549. After their early dinner Londoners of all classes were hurrying through the streets that they might get a good place at the preaching; for Master Hugh Latimer, sometime Bishop of Worcester, was preaching the sermon that afternoon, and everybody knew his quality. Round about the cathedral the booksellers and their apprentices had stopped calling their wares, and there was a lull in the busy street life. Everybody seemed to be going in the same direction—city merchants in dark gowns, wearing rich chains about their necks, with their wives in close-fitting cloth dresses and the fashionable high head-gear; the children, boys and girls, looking like small copies of their parents, decorously followed, in charge of a maidservant or a stout apprentice. There were fine gentlemen in doublet and hose and richly embroidered cloaks, scholars in gown and fur cap, craftsmen in the dress of their company, grooms in the livery of their masters; with a sprinkling of out-at-elbows idlers and vagabonds. It was a dreary afternoon, cold and overcast, with promise of rain, but no one dreamed of turning back for the weather, though the preaching was to be in the open air.

Just before the clock struck two came Master Latimer, a tall, sturdy old man, with his square bishop's cap on his head and his black cloak wrapped about him. Behind him walked his faithful servant, Augustine Bernher, a Swiss, a man of good education and fervent piety. They had

come from Lambeth Palace, where, since the accession of Edward VI, Latimer had lived with his friend Archbishop Cranmer, refusing to take again his former bishopric of Worcester.

Hats were doffed as he went by, and mothers whispered to their children to look at Master Latimer, who was the friend of the people, and was not afraid, even before the King himself, to make complaint of the wrongs that they suffered. Latimer looked kindly upon them all, and said now and then a hearty " God bless you " ; for he was no proud dignitary of the Church, but a plain man of the people. His face was worn and his features sharpened by the trouble and persecution he had suffered, and he walked with bowed shoulders, as if he carried a burden of years. Yet he still looked what he was, the son of a good yeoman stock, used to plain living and hard work and the fresh air that blows across wide country spaces. The people loved him and delighted in his sermons. He had a homely way of speaking to them that they could understand, and he preached no subtle doctrine, but the plain religion of Christ. Sometimes he told them little stories of his own life and upbringing, and they relished these exceedingly :

> My father was a yeoman, and had no lands of his own, only he had a farm of three or four pound by year at the uttermost, and hereupon he tilled so much as kept half a dozen men. He had walk for a hundred sheep, and my mother milked thirty kine. He was able and did find the King a harness, with himself and his horse, while he came to the place that he should receive the King's wages. I can remember that I buckled his harness, when he went unto Blackheath field. He kept me to school, or else I had not been able to have preached before the King's majesty now. He married my sisters with five pound or twenty nobles apiece, so that he brought them up in godliness and fear of God.

Latimer was fearless in his references to evildoers, no matter how high they stood in place and favour, and though he did not often use names there was no uncertainty in his hearers' minds as to who was meant. There was an element of excitement too in listening to him, for one could never be sure how far his indignation against wrongdoers would

carry him. Those who were present on the day he preached on bribery never forgot the thrill that had gone round when he said, " He that took the silver basin and ewer for a bribe thinketh that it will never come out; but he may now know that I know it."

Master Latimer made his way across St Paul's Churchyard to where on a rectangular piece of ground, bounded on two sides by the north transept and the nave, stood " a pulpit cross of timber, mounted upon steps of stone and covered with lead," as the chronicler Stowe describes it. This was Paul's Cross, famous in our history. He mounted the steps and entered the pulpit, then looked round upon the congregation gathered in the great space before him. Some were sitting on benches, some on folding stools which they had brought with them, but most were standing, with their cloaks wrapped closely about them. Over against the side of the church there was a row of seats, enclosed and roofed in, where the notable people sat; kings and queens with their trains had often occupied them. To-day the most important personages seated there were bishops. So much the better. Master Latimer had a word to say to them before his sermon was finished.

He held up his hand, and the stir and chatter among the people sank into silence. Then he knelt down and recited the Lord's Prayer, clearly and slowly, that the people, still but little used to the English version, might learn it in place of the old *Pater Noster*. Then he rose, and his tranquil, steady eyes met in friendly fashion the gaze of the many faces raised toward him. He began to speak in a clear, full voice, familiarly, naturally, as one friend would speak to another. First came the text: " All things which are written are written for our erudition and knowledge. All things that are written in the Bible book, in the book of the Holy Scripture, are written to be our doctrine." Then Master Latimer began his sermon:

> I told you in my first sermon that I purposed to declare unto you two things. The one what seed should be sown in God's field, in God's plough-land; and the other who should be the sowers.

The bishops in their sheltered seats moved a little uneasily. This sermon, then, was to be about the clergy, and Master Latimer was known to be a plain speaker.

> For preaching the Gospel is one of God's plough-works, and the preacher is one of God's ploughmen. And well may the preacher and the ploughman be likened together. First, for their labour of seasons of the year. For there is no time of the year in which the ploughman hath not some special work to do, as in my country of Leicestershire. . . . For the preaching of the word of God unto the people is called meat, Scripture calleth it meat. Not strawberries that come but once a year and tarry not long, but are soon gone; but it is meat. It is no dainties. The people must have meat that must be familiar and continual and daily given unto them to feed upon. Many make a strawberry of it, ministering it but once a year, but such do not the office of good prelates.

The congregation appreciated this point. A laugh went round and a little buzz of talking. "Strawberry preachers!" said somebody, and the name stuck. For years afterward the citizens of London talked about "Strawberry preachers."

So long as the sermon dealt with the shortcomings of the clergy the faces turned toward Master Latimer showed nothing but interest and good-humour. But soon it was the turn of the London citizens.

> Now what shall we say of these rich citizens of London? What shall I say of them? Shall I call them proud men of London, merciless men of London? No, no, I must not say so. They will be offended with me then. Yet must I speak. For is there not reigning in London as much pride, as much coveteousness, as much cruelty, as much oppression, and as much superstition as was in Nebo? Yes, I think, and much more too. Therefore I say, "Repent, O London, repent, repent." . . .
>
> What ado was there made in London of a certain man because he said (and indeed on that time on a just cause), "Burgesses," quoth he, "nay, Butterflies." Lord, what ado there was for that word! And yet would God they were no worse than butterflies.

The name of the audacious person who called the citizens of London "Butterflies" has not come down to us. But the congregation gathered round Paul's Cross that afternoon

knew it, and Master Latimer's reference caused an angry hum to rise from the crowd. But he was not the man to be turned from his way by any signs of disapproval.

> But London cannot abide to be rebuked; such is the nature of man. If they be pricked they will kick. But London was never so ill as it is now. In times past men were full of pity and compassion, but now there is no pity, for in London their brother shall die in the streets for cold, he shall lie sick at their door between stock and stock.

And he went on telling them in the plainest terms of their lack of charity and loving-kindness. In former times, he said, rich men often helped poor scholars at the universities.

> When I was a scholar in Cambridge myself I heard very good report of London, and knew many who had relief of the rich men of London, but now I hear no such good reports.

But after all the sermon was not to be about the citizens, but about the ploughers, and Master Latimer was soon back to his main subject.

> But now for the fault of unpreaching prelates. Methinks I could guess what might be said for excusing of them. They are so troubled with lordly living, they be so placed in palaces, couched in Courts, ruffling in their rents, dancing in their dominions, burdened with ambassages, pampering of their paunches like a monk that maketh his jubilee; munching in their mangers, and moiling in their gay manors and mansions, and so troubled with loitering in their lordships that they cannot attend it.

This was a rhetorical flight indeed for plain Master Latimer, and the people enjoyed his sarcasm all the better for the unexpected form it had taken. But he was soon down to plain facts once more.

> They are otherwise occupied, some in the King's matters, some are ambassadors, some of the Privy Council, some to furnish the Court, some are lords in the Parliament, some are presidents and comptrollers of mints. Well, well! Should we have ministers of the Church to be comptrollers of the mint? Is this a meet office for a priest that hath cure of souls?

We do not know who was this priestly comptroller of the mint. But Master Latimer's audience knew, and prob-

LATIMER PREACHING AT ST PAUL'S CROSS

Sir George Hayter.

Henry Graves and Co.

ably his appointment was at that time being talked of throughout London. Again the hum arose, as each man gave his opinion on the matter to his neighbour.

> If the Apostles might not leave the office of preaching to the deacons shall one leave it for minting ? I cannot tell you, but the saying is that since priests have been minters money hath been worse than it was before. . . . So England, I speak it to thy shame, is there never a nobleman to be a lord president ? Is there never a wise man in the realm to be comptroller of the mint ? If there be never a wise man make a water-bearer, a tinker, a cobbler, a slave, a page, comptroller of the mint, make a mean gentleman, a groom, a yeoman, or a poor beggar lord president.

It is want of education only, Latimer maintains, which makes the noblemen of England unable to hold these high offices. Therefore let schools be established in which they may be taught all things necessary to godly statecraft.

Perhaps among those stately and dignified prelates opposite, who were regarding the speaker with no very great enthusiasm, there was one or more who hid in his heart a hope of following in the footsteps of this much-berated comptroller of the mint—perhaps one who was openly spoken of as a candidate for some high State office. If this were so, and if Master Latimer knew it, the knowledge only braced him to a more direct and uncompromising attack. He leaned forward a little and raised his hand. His fine, benevolent face grew grim.

> And now I would ask a strange question. Who is the most diligentest bishop and prelate in all England that passeth all the rest in doing his office ? I can tell, for I know him. I will tell you ; it is the devil. He is the most diligent preacher of all other ; he is never out of his diocese ; he is never from his cure : ye shall never find him unoccupied ; he is ever in his parish ; he keepeth residence at all times ; ye shall never find him out of the way, call for him when ye will he is ever at home, the diligentest preacher in all the realm ; he is ever at his plough, no lording nor loitering can hinder him ; he is ever plying his business, ye shall never find him idle, I warrant you. . . . Therefore, ye unpreaching prelates, learn of the devil to be diligent doing your office. Learn of the devil. And if ye will not learn of God nor of good man, for shame learn of the devil.

To Master Latimer as well as to his hearers Satan was an actual and terrible personality, going about the world intent on his wicked business; and the preacher went on to draw a picture of this unresting, malicious enemy of man toiling diligently at his black work.

> And when he had once brought Christ to the Cross he thought all cocksure. But there lost he all his reigning, for Christ said, "I will draw all things to myself." . . . For whereas Christ, according as the serpent was lift up in the wilderness; so would he himself to be exalted that thereby as many as trusted in him should have salvation. But the devil would have none of that.

Here came an attack on the "daily oblation propitiatory," the "sacrifice expiatory and remissory"—the Mass of the Roman Church; the upholding of this was, said the preacher, chief among the wicked deeds wrought by the devil, "by the help of that Italian bishop yonder, his chaplain." The people had heard all this many times before, and their relish for it was not as keen as that which they felt when their own bishops were being attacked. Yet they listened approvingly, for to them a sermon would not have been a sermon if it had made no reference to the alleged evil practices of the Church of Rome.

But Latimer would not end on this contentious note. The sternness died out of his voice and his eyes grew mild as he told the people in simple language what was the true service that God required.

> And good hope there is that it shall be here in England, for the King's majesty is so brought up in knowledge, virtue, and godliness that it is not to be mistrusted but that we shall have all things well, and that the glory of God shall be spread abroad throughout all parts of the realm, if the prelates will diligently apply their plough and be preachers rather than lords.

And, in conclusion, a prayer for the King. "Pray for him, good people, pray for him. Ye have great cause and need to pray for him."

Master Latimer knelt down, and again repeated the Lord's Prayer; then rose, and, folding his cloak about him, stepped quietly down from the pulpit, and out across the

churchyard, the people reverently making way. The bishops had disappeared from their sheltered seats; the dusk was coming on, and a drizzling rain was beginning to fall. The congregation broke up into little groups and made its way out into the street, each group eagerly discussing the sermon and its preacher. Master Latimer with his faithful servant passed as quickly as might be on his way. Bernher had been busy taking notes of all his master had said, and by and by the two would go over these together, altering, adding, and rewriting. It is to Bernher that we owe our knowledge of this and other sermons of Hugh Latimer, which were later "Imprinted at London by Thomas Day, dwelling at Aldersgate, and William Seres, dwelling in Peter College," and were sold "by the little Conduite in Cheapside."

CHAPTER XV

A GENERAL READER IN THE DAYS OF ELIZABETH

THE general reader of any past age is a person whose acquaintance would bring us much profit, but there are many difficulties in the way of knowing him. With dead-and-gone kings and queens and famous men and women of all ranks we may become comparatively intimate, but the general reader continually eludes us. He mingles with the scholars, students, bibliophiles, occasional readers, men who read only one kind of book, and men who read the books that are in fashion ; and as we look back over the ages behind us we cannot pick him out from the crowd.

Yet he has definite characteristics which distinguish him from these others. He reads not to gain knowledge or culture, not as a duty or as a means to an end, not even for recreation and amusement. He reads because he loves reading and gains from it a peculiar delight. He has a catholic taste, and will read almost anything rather than not read at all. Yet he has a fine discrimination and a keen relish for the choicer morsels of the great feast. He has no passion for first editions and rare copies, and though he loves clear print and good bindings the *édition de luxe* is not for him.

The best, perhaps the only, way of getting to know a general reader is through his own self-revelation. It is thus that we know Samuel Pepys, Charles II's very lively and efficient Clerk to the Admiralty. If only there had been a Pepys in every generation what a difference it would have made to us who call ourselves general readers to-day ! With what a thrill of genial comradeship we should have looked back upon the undistinguished company ! How we should have loved to follow each one to the bookshop—as we can follow Pepys—and watch him as he considered how he could best lay out the few shillings or the few pounds that he had decided he could afford to spend ; stand by him as he made

his choice; sympathize with him when—like Pepys—he spent more than the sum allotted, and went on his homeward way rueful but impenitent; watch him as he sat down to read in his library, or his parlour, or his kitchen, and listen to his comments and his criticisms!

There were, we are sure, very many general readers among the subjects of the Great Queen, but they neglected to keep that detailed diary which would have made them known to later generations. We must therefore take such imperfect revelations as the literature of the time gives us and from these make out the best picture that we can.

There is one Elizabethan who tells us, somewhat in the style of Pepys, a good deal, though not enough, about his taste in books and the extent of his reading. His name was Robert Laneham, and he was a mercer of London. He seems to have been a genial, merry fellow, quick-witted and well-educated. He could speak French, Spanish, Dutch, and Italian, could dance, sing, and play on various instruments. Either his accomplishments or his lively temper gained him the favour of the Earl of Leicester, who found him a post at Court and advanced his fortune in various ways. When Queen Elizabeth paid her famous visit to Kenilworth from July 9 to July 27, 1575, Robert Laneham was among the company. He wrote a long letter to Master Humfrey Martin, his friend and brother-mercer, describing in detail the entertainment provided each day for the Queen, and the share which he himself contrived to get in all that was going forward. He loved company, and flattered himself that he was a favourite with people of quality, especially with the ladies. He writes:

> Alwayez among the Gentlemen, with my good will, and when I see company according, then can I be az lively too. Sumtyme I foote it with dauncing, neow with my Gittern and els with my Cittern, then at the Virginalz, you know nothing comes amiss to mee—then caroll I up a song withal that by and by they come flocking about me lyke beez too hunny and ever they cry, "anoother, good Laneham, anoother."

He managed to get a good place at all the pageants and entertainments, and described them shrewdly and amusingly.

On the second Sunday of the Queen's visit there came a deputation from the people of Coventry, praying that the old hock-play which they had been used to perform on the Tuesday in Whitsun week, " tyll now of late laid dooun, they knu no cauz why onless it wear by the zeal of certain theyr Preachers . . . sumwhat too sour in preaching away their pastime," might be resumed.

It is in Laneham's description of one of these Coventry worthies that the chief interest—for us—of his description lies. " But awaie, keep back ! " he says,

> make room now, heer they come. And fyrst, Captain Cox, an od man, I promis yow ; by profession a mason, and that right skilful, very cunning in fens, and hard as Gawin ; great oversight hath he in matters of storie. For as for *King Arthur's Book*, the *Four Sons of Aymon, Bevis of Southampton, Huon of Bordeaux* . . .

And Laneham goes on to give a long list—thirty-three in all—of romances, stories, poems, jest-books, and satires which, he says, he believes Captain Cox has, with many more, " at his fingers' ends." The romances are in English, French, Spanish, and Latin ; the other books are many of them of the witty, scurrilous type that was in great favour among the lower classes in Tudor times—satires on women, political and personal skits, popular stories more coarse than edifying. " Then," Laneham resumes,

> in Philosophy, both Moral and Natural, I think he is as naturally overseen,[1] besides poetry and astronomy and other hid sciences, as I may guess by the omberty[2] of his books, whereof part as I remember. . . .

And he goes on to give the names of eighteen more books, only three of which, however (*The Shepheard's Calendar*, a handbook of popular philosophy, *Daniel's Dream*, an astrological treatise, and Dr Boorde's *Breviary of Health*, a treatise on medicine), seem to have anything to do with science. The rest are, again, popular and humorous works of the day. There is the notorious *Ship of Fools* by Alexander Barclay, a poem in which all the fools of the kingdom are

[1] well learned. [2] shadowing.

Non vult q̄ nigri ſubeamus tartara ditis:
At propria ruimus culpa ſuperoſq̄ negamus
Reddere qui iuſtis animis pia gaudia poſſunt.
Eſaię.xlv. Deſine ſtulte loqui: petulans compeſce labellum:
Ad Rom.ix. An figulo cacabus dicet: cur vrceus haud ſum?
Sic placet artifici. bene qui bona cuncta parauit

¶ Of predeſtynacion.

¶ That man that lokyth for to haue a rewarde
Whiche he hath nat deſeruyd to obtayne
And lenyth his body vpon a rede forwarde
Whiche for waykenes may hym nat well ſuſtayne
For ſoth this fole may longe ſo loke in vayne
And on the Craups he ſtyll ſhall bacwarde ryde
Tryenge with the doue/ whoſe flyght ſhall hym ay gyde

Preſciētia dei.

Elegit nos in ipo añ cōſtitutionē mūdi vt eſſemus ſācti & imaculati i cōſpectu eius in caritate q̄ p̄deſtinauit nos in adoptionē filioꝝ. Oēs q̄ dē p̄ſciti pauci vero ad vitam predeſtinati Nouit deus qui ſūt eius exhis nemo ſe ducitur.

Ad ephe.i.

De peſi. diſ. iiij c. bñdictus. ij.

Ad thymo. ij.

¶ This vnlawfull man to be dilygent
Of ſerchynge goddes workes to ſet his thought
How he hath made the heuen and fyrmament
The erth the ſee and euery thynge of nought
yet of ſome Folys the cauſe hereof is ſought
Whiche labour alſo with curyoſyte
To know the begynnynge of his dyuynyte

A Page from Barclay's "Ship of Fools"
Printed by Pynson, 1509.
British Museum

imagined as passengers on a single ship, and each type is racily described; *The Highway to the Spittle House*, a sketch of the rogues and beggars who resorted to a certain almshouse, and the frauds and deceits practised by them; and *Julian of Brainford's Testament*, a mock will in which the testator leaves his vices and his follies to various legatees, and which is one of the coarsest and most unsavoury examples of the class of literature to which it belongs. Each of these works was immensely popular throughout Tudor times, and each set a fashion which was widely followed.

Captain Cox also possesses, so Laneham goes on to tell his friend, four ancient plays—*Youth and Charity*, *Hycke Scorner*, *New Guise*, and *Impatient Poverty*—and "a great bunch of ballads and songs." He gives the names of nine of these, and then says:

> And a hundred more he hath fair wrapped up in parchment and bound with a whipcord. And as for almanacs of antiquity, I ween he can show from Jaspar Leet of Antwerp unto Nosterdame of France, and thence unto our John Securis of Salisbury. To stay you no longer herein, I dare say he hath as fair a library for these sciences and as many goodly monuments both in prose and poetry, and at afternoons can talk as much without book as any Innholder between Brainford and Bagshot what degree soever he be.

Here the digression ends. Laneham returns to his main theme, the description of the Kenilworth festivities, and we are left to wonder why he has introduced this list and how it comes about that a London mercer has such an intimate knowledge of the library of a Coventry mason. Dr Furnivall thinks that Captain Cox has nothing to do with the matter, and that Laneham is really giving an account of his own books under this thin disguise. This theory removes some difficulties and raises others, but is, on the whole, perhaps the best way of looking at things. For if Laneham did not actually possess these books he quite evidently knew all about them, and we may adjudge his claim to be considered as a general reader on this knowledge.

There are one or two other points in his favour that must be noted. He quotes in his letter from various Latin authors, showing that he has some acquaintance with the

classics; and he gives some direct evidence on his own behalf. "I have leizure sumtime when I tend not upon the coounsel," he says, "whearby now looke I on one book, now on another"—which is quite according to the habit of the general reader. "Stories I delight in, the more auncient and rare the more likesum to me"—which again is to his credit. And he ends with a jest that still further inclines our hearts toward him:

> If I tolld ye I lyked Wm a Malmesbury so well bicauz of his diligence and antiquitez, perchauns ye would conster it becauz I love Mamzey so well: but i feith! it iz not so for sipt I no more sak and suger (and yet never but with company) than I doo Malmzey, I should not blush so moch a dayz as I doo.

On the whole we may perhaps admit his claim, though with reservations. He is but a weak brother. There are too many works of pure entertainment in his list, and too few of the rarer sort. Even in 1575 there were many of these to be had by the true reader. We miss *The Canterbury Tales* and *The Golden Legend*, Froissart's *Chronicles*, More's *Utopia*, Ascham's *Scholemaster*, and *Tottel's Miscellany*; we miss a copy of the Bible and the Prayer Book. Laneham represents, perhaps, the ordinary rather than the general reader, though it is improbable that many men of his class had so large a library. But some of the books he names were undoubtedly to be found in most middle-class households.

There is another reason, besides the narrowness of his range, which makes Laneham an unsatisfactory example of the Elizabethan general reader. His letter was written only seventeen years after the Queen's accession, when the great works which made her reign glorious had not yet been written. Twenty years later Laneham, if he had lived so long, would, we cannot doubt, have added many volumes to his library. We will try, therefore, to make for ourselves some picture of the general reader of the end of the century, making use of the hints and suggestions which are to be found in great abundance in the literature of the time.

Like general readers of every age, the Elizabethan loved the bookshop and was often to be found there. In his day

the chief haunt of the booksellers was St Paul's Churchyard and the adjoining Paternoster Row, though there were a few shops in Fleet Street, and some on London Bridge. But the churchyard was full of them. Permanent buildings stood all round it, as they do to-day, and most of these were for the sale of books. In the roadway, by the walls of the Cathedral and on its steps, were booths or stalls belonging to booksellers who had their printing-works elsewhere; for in those days the booksellers were also the publishers. Many of them started in business by printing a number of copies of one particular work, and if this sold well they exchanged some copies for works published by other booksellers, and so gradually built up a stock. Many drew large sums from the monopoly granted by the State of a certain book or class of books. The less reputable were always on the look-out for manuscripts of verses, stories, or tracts which it was the fashion of that time for authors to pass round among their friends, and when one of these fell into their hands they hastened to print and sell it, the authors having no redress.

All day and every day the churchyard was full of an animated company, who turned over the newest books and pamphlets, read the latest ballads and broadsides, laughed, commented, discussed, argued, and bargained, while the booksellers or their apprentices stood by the stalls, calling out, "What lack ye, gentlemen? I pray you, will you see any good books?" Men of every class were represented in the crowd—noblemen, merchants, lawyers, country gentlemen and farmers on a visit to town, seafaring men whose ships had just arrived in port, poets, playwrights, actors, out-at-elbows fine gentlemen, sober Puritans clad in severe black, noisy students, and roystering young gallants.

Here in the busy churchyard it should not be difficult to pick out at least one general reader. We shall not distinguish him by his bearing or his conversation or the cut of his coat, for there are general readers of all ranks and ages and dispositions. It will be best to take a stand by one of the bookstalls and observe the purchasers closely. There is a crowd round John Day's booth, which stands by the side of the cathedral. He had it put up, at a cost of from forty

to fifty pounds, because he found that his large shop in Aldersgate was out of the way of trade ; so he " got framed a neat and handsome shop. It was but little and low and flat-roofed, and leaded like a terrace framed and posted, fit for men to stand upon in any triumph or show." John Day had the monopoly of the Psalms in metre and the ABC and Catechism, and these brought him in a large profit ; but he published many other books as well—Sackville and Norton's *Gorboduc* and Ascham's *Scholemaster*, as well as many ecclesiastical and learned works ; and he had besides a large stock of books bought from other publishers.

At the far end of the stall a few grave divines and young clerks are buying the Psalms and the Catechism to supply their churches and schools, but the greatest throng is gathered round the more alluring piles of new books near which the proprietor stands, keeping a wary eye on volumes that are being passed from hand to hand. A student from Cambridge has taken up Nashe's satire *Pierce Penilesse, his Supplication to the Divell*, and is reading aloud with immense enjoyment the passage which most of the company know already, but which they are quite willing to hear again :

> If I were to paint Sloth, by Saint John the Evangelist, I swear I would draw it like a stationer that I know, with his thumb under his girdle, who if a man comes to his stall and asks him for a book, never stirs his head or looks upon him, but stands stone still and speaks not a word : only with his little finger points backwards to his boy who must be his interpreter, and so all the day, gaping like a dumb image, he sits without motion, except at such times as he goes to dinner or supper : for then he is quick as other three, eating six times a day.

The audience shouts with laughter, the only one who does not enjoy the jest being probably John Day.

One of the gayest of the noisy group is a young man with an alert bearing and a keen, attractive face, who wears doublet and hose of gaily coloured satin and a velvet cloak. But they are worn and soiled, and there are other marks of poverty about him, and it is evident that he is no Court gallant or rich man's son. He is probably the son of a thrifty merchant or yeoman, whose pride in his son's cleverness has led him to spend some of his savings on a university

education for the boy, and has afterward sent him on the tour to Italy which was at that time considered necessary for a man of breeding. To come home and settle down to the earning of one's own living was to most youths an unwelcome change after the pleasures and excitements of travel, but this young man seems to be taking it lightheartedly enough. He is a law student, living in a poor lodging, and though his father makes him a sufficient allowance his recklessness and improvidence cause him to be always in straits for money. He has come this morning to Paul's resolved to buy nothing, but only to look round and see what new books have been published since he came last.

He looks covetously over the alluring piles, taking up first one volume, then another, reading eagerly a page or two, then laying it reluctantly down. Look and touch show the book-lover. Here is an array of travel-books, with a tempting copy of Hakluyt's *Principall Navigations* to the front, a weighty folio bound in sheepskin. It is a rich man's book, and quite out of the reach of an impecunious law-student. All he can hope to know of its contents is from snatched readings such as these; and, being conscious of the bookseller's wary eye bent upon him, he dares not monopolize the volume too long. As he lays it down he notices the posters in front of the shop, stuck up on cleft sticks. They announce two new works, *The Old Wives' Tale* by George Peele and Books IV–VI of Edmund Spenser's *The Faerie Queene*. The second poster especially makes his mouth water, for he has at home the first three books of the poem, published six years before, and they have given him great delight. But alas! he cannot spare the four shillings or thereabouts that he knows he must pay for the poem, a copy of which he can see lying on the other side of the stall. Stealthily he makes his way toward it, takes it up, and reads eagerly page after page, forgetful of his surroundings; until he is interrupted by the bookseller's impatient query whether he wishes to buy the book. He laughs, shakes his head, and slaps his empty pockets, while worthy John Day smiles grimly.

The young men gathered in front of the stall are still

making merry. A copy of the latest jest-book is passing from hand to hand, while the youthful critics shout noisy praise or blame of its contents. Our reader joins the group and shouts and laughs as noisily as the rest. But the spell of *The Faerie Queene* is still upon him, and presently he moves slowly and thoughtfully away; and passing to the stall of Richard Tottel, who holds the monopoly for law-books, he considers whether there are any among the learned works with which his father has provided him that could be changed for the new poem. But he decides ruefully that there are already too many gaps in that row of grave and serious volumes; and he turns to a mental survey of those other shelves where stands his too scanty store of books for delight —a ragged and mixed company, but well loved. There are song-books, jest-books, books of riddles, cheap romances; a Bible and a Prayer Book; Marlowe's *Faustus*, Greene's *Friar Bacon and Friar Bungay*, Lyly's *Euphues*, Painter's *Palace of Pleasure*, Fenton's *Tragical Discourses*, North's translation of Plutarch, Foxe's *Book of Martyrs*, *A Gorgious Gallery of Gallant Inventions*, Spenser's *The Shepheard's Calender*, More's *Utopia*, Lodge's *Rosalynde*; half a dozen French and Italian *novelle*; copies of school and university classics. No, he cannot make up his mind to part with any of these, even if, soiled and worn as they are, a bookseller could be induced to take them, which is doubtful.

There is no help for it, *The Faerie Queene* must wait until another day when money is more plentiful. He may as well look at *The Old Wives' Tale*, however, and he turns toward the north-west door of St Paul's, where Henry Bynneman has his stall, with a fine stock of plays and romances. Arrived there, he looks for a copy of the book of which he is in search, but his eye is caught by Sylvester's translation of Du Bartas' *Divine Weekes and Workes*, of which he has read scraps on previous visits to the bookstalls. He takes it up and turns over the pages eagerly. There is no great throng about this stall, and its proprietor, who has just finished selling a copy of Hooker's *Ecclesiastical Polity*, Books I–IV, to a customer who looks like a wealthy merchant, is in a good humour. He takes no notice of the young man, who sits

down on the steps of the cathedral and begins to read. But Du Bartas' monotonous rhyming lines seem to-day to have lost their charm for him—perhaps because the rhythms of *The Faerie Queene* still linger in his head. He puts the book back and takes up *The Old Wives' Tale*. Here is amusement and variety enough ; and the thin quarto is only sixpence ; he will buy it. So he does, and goes off fairly well contented. But passing John Day's stall he sees that alluring *Faerie Queene* once more. He counts his money. If he buys it there will be very little left for a dinner. But no matter ; he knows an ordinary where the food is cheap if coarse, and where he will be sure to find book-lovers in like case with himself, who will gloat with him over his treasure.

So he pays for it cheerfully and goes off with a light heart and a light purse, but with the prospect of an evening of delight before him. But he vows as he goes that he will come no more to these beguiling bookstalls until he has received the next instalment of his allowance. St Paul's Churchyard is a dangerous place for a general reader with small means and a healthy appetite.

CHAPTER XVI

TUDOR SONGS AND BALLADS

THE fifteenth century saw the gradual dying out of the old class of roving minstrels, and when the sixteenth century opened those that still remained on the road had either taken up the new profession of acting or had sunk into mere hangers-on at fairs and taverns. Such of the minstrels-turned-actors as loved music and hankered after their old profession must have felt, when they went about the country, that any chance of a return to that profession became day by day more hopeless. As they travelled from town to town and from village to village, they saw crowds flocking to the performances in which they played their parts ; but if one of them took his stand by the wayside and began to sing an old ballad which had once had magic to draw the people from their farms and cottages only a few chance wayfarers stopped to listen. The people had altogether lost their taste for the old romances, and as for the shorter ballads—*Adam Bell, Robin Hood, Chevy Chase, Sir Patrick Spens, The Nut-brown Mayd,* and others—they knew most of the minstrel's stock by heart, and sang them for themselves as they sat round the fire in winter or worked in the fields under the summer sun.

They sang the old folk-songs too, and the carols and drinking songs, the lullabies and the chants for the games, in the making of which the minstrels' forerunners had had so large a share. There were no half-made songs waiting for them now when they came upon a group of youths and maidens at their sports on the village-green. If they looked into one of the cottages they would find, as likely as not, a roughly printed copy, adorned with a crudely coloured woodcut, of one of the ballads of the day—a political rhyme, perhaps, or a ballad out of an old moral, bought from a travelling pedlar. In the towns things were no better.

There were no minstrels to be seen save the few that sang outside a tavern or at a street corner with a chance of getting a few small coins bestowed upon them for charity.

Such of the acting companies as played in rich men's halls or at the Court found that the singers now were the guests and the courtiers, who accompanied themselves upon one of the new instruments that were coming into fashion—the cittern, the viol, or the lute. Before many years of the sixteenth century had gone by the sensitive musical ear of the one-time minstrel recognized a change in the songs that he heard as he hung listening about the noblemen's halls. They seemed to have a clearer, more finely marked rhythm, a more definite form, a more careful finish. At the King's Court the change was still more marked, and it became clear that the old order of songs was passing away and a new one taking its place. The Court was full of music and gaiety. There was a new king, Henry VIII, young and handsome and high-spirited, a fine musician and a lover of poetry. He led the way in the making and singing of new songs, and the courtiers were eager to follow him. Many of them had taken the tour on the Continent which had come to be regarded as a most desirable finish to a well-bred youth's education. They had visited France and Italy, and these countries, having early felt the influence of the Renaissance, had been already full of songs which in form and rhythm and spirit were very different from the old. When they returned home they had brought with them many of these songs—had brought, too, a strong taste for the new poetry and an eager desire to make verses of the same kind for themselves.

Sadly the minstrel admitted that his day was indeed over. These fine gentlemen could make a song and sing it as well as any of his old fraternity could have done. They kept manuscript books in which they copied their own songs as well as those which pleased them among the work of others, and so they built up a stock that was as varied and inviting as any professional collection. King Henry himself had his song-book, which is still in existence, and one of its songs, which he made himself, is the merry *Pastyme with Good Companye.*

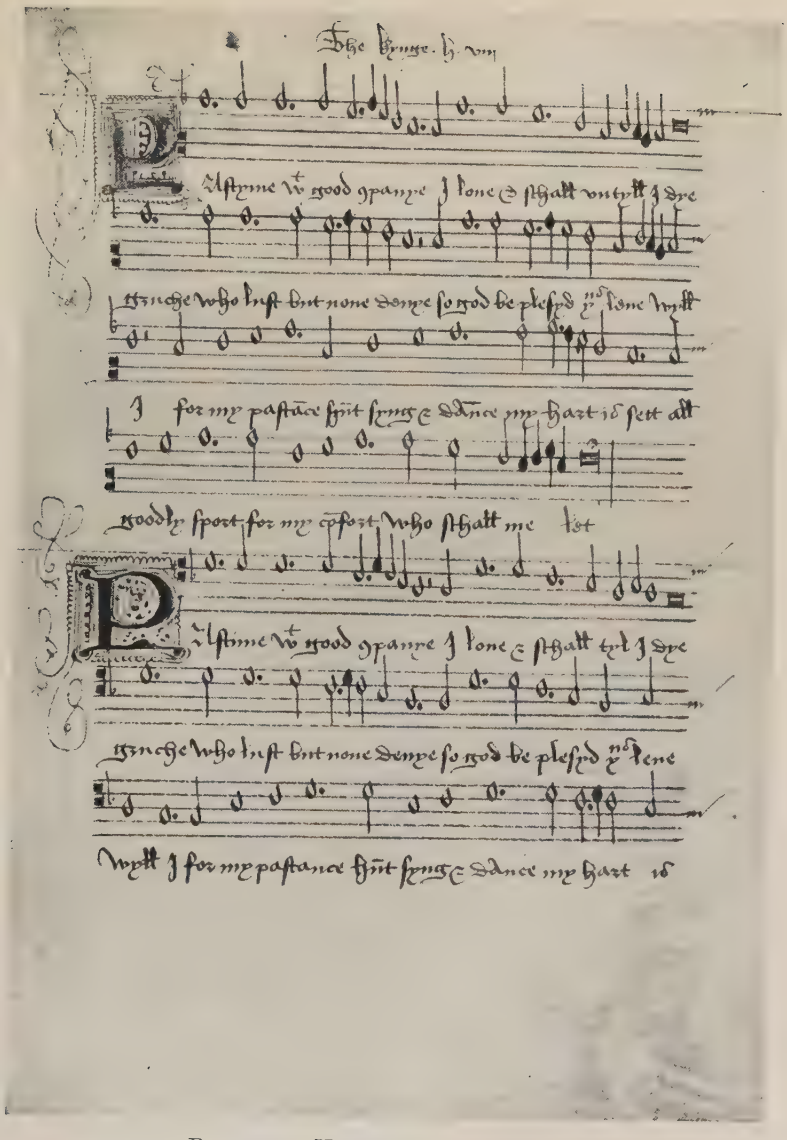
Pastyme with good companye,
I love and shall untyll I die,
Gruche who lust, but none denye
So God be plesyd thus leve wyll I.
For my pastance,
Hunt, sing and dance,
My heart is set.
All goodly sport
For my comfort
Who shall me let.

To make or sing good verses was a sure way to the King's favour. Sir Peter Carew, we are told, "having a pleasant voice, the King would often use him to sing with him certain songs they call Freemen's Songs" (that is, "three men's songs," or songs in three parts), "as *On a Bank as I lay*, and *As I walked the Wood so Wylde*." There was also "one Gray" who had "grown into good estimation with King Henry VIII for making certain merry ballads, whereof one chiefly was,

"The hunt is up, the hunt is up,
And it is well nigh day.
Harry our King has gone hunting
To bring his deer to bay."

Twenty years later the song-making was still going on. The King himself, engrossed by sterner and more terrible interests, rarely had time for the music which had once delighted him, but among the noblemen of his Court great advances had been made. In the lovely songs of the Earl of Surrey and Sir Thomas Wyatt the new melody after which the song-makers had so long been feeling sounded full and clear. Their success helped and inspired others. Moreover, the influence of France and Italy was being more strongly and directly felt. Foreign travel had become almost a necessary part of the education of a youth of breeding, and every youth who came back from the Continent had his part in strengthening the influences that were forming English poetry.

Gradually the songs that were sung at Court began to reach the larger audience outside. It came about in a very simple, almost casual fashion. A gentleman of the



PAGE FROM HENRY VIII'S SONG-BOOK
Showing his own song, *Pastyme with Good Companye.*
Addit. MSS., British Museum

Court—a Wyatt, a Surrey, or later a Sidney or a Shakespeare, or one of the many lesser poets—found pleasure or relief in expressing some thought or mood in the form of a poem. He showed it to his friends, who read and criticized it, and passed it on to others of their circle. Perhaps it was not greatly admired, and after a day or two passed out of notice. It was left carelessly about, and was destroyed, or passed to kitchen uses; it disappeared, and its owner made no inquiry after it; he had probably forgotten all about it, and had written half a dozen fresh ones, which were on their way to a similar fate. Or perhaps the poem was received with enthusiasm and set all the Court talking. Ladies and gentlemen copied it into their manuscript books, and famous musicians begged leave to set it to music. Its author sang it before an admiring audience to the accompaniment of the viol or the lute. But not one of these "Courtly makers" ever thought of publishing his verses, and few took any care to preserve them, so that it is probable that many lyrics, some perhaps as lovely as the loveliest that have come down to us, were lost.

Many more would probably have gone the same way had not some of these lightly valued sheets come to the notice of enterprising publishers, who were on the look-out for works that promised to have a good sale. The first of these publishers was Richard Tottel, a bookseller of St Paul's Churchyard, who up to this time had been chiefly occupied with the publication of law-books. He collected —with or without the permission of the authors, for there was no law of copyright in those days—a number of poems by Wyatt and Surrey, and forty other poems whose writers are in most cases not certainly known; and in 1557, a few months before Elizabeth came to the throne, he published these in a book which he called "Songes and Sonnettes written by the right honorable Lord Henry Howard, late Earl of Surrey, and other," but which was commonly known as *Tottel's Miscellany*.

Songs which had before belonged to the Court circle only now became the property of anyone who cared to pay his money and buy a copy of the *Miscellany* at a stall

in St Paul's Churchyard. Very soon the book became widely known, and it remained popular for many years. Shakespeare knew it well, and when in 1601 he wrote his *Merry Wives of Windsor* he showed how the ordinary middle-class man had come to regard it as a familiar companion. "I had rather than forty shillings I had my book of songs and sonnets here," said Master Slender (meaning the *Miscellany*) when he was at a loss how to make conversation to suit "sweet Anne Page." So successful was it that other publishers followed Richard Tottel's example, and a series of miscellanies, with fanciful and enticing names, appeared at intervals during the next fifty years. There was *The Paradyse of Daynty Devices* (1576), *A Gorgious Gallery of Gallant Inventions* (1578), *A Handfull of Pleasant Delites* (1584), and, best of all, *England's Helicon* (1600); and there were many others. As time went on there were fewer poems from gentlemen of the Court and more from the large class of professional poets that seemed to spring up suddenly after the publication of Spenser's *Shepheard's Calender* in 1579. Besides the miscellanies, musicians of the day compiled and published song-books, in which some of the verses which they set to music were their own and some were other people's.

All these collections served not only to spread the verses of the Courtly and the professional poets, but to extend the practices of verse-making and singing among the people in general. It was counted a reproach, almost a disgrace, to a man or woman of any education or breeding not to be able to bear a part in the singing of glees and madrigals. "I desire no more in you than to sing your part sure and at first sight; withal to play the same upon your viol, or the exercise of the lute," said Henry Peacham, a writer of the time, in his *Compleat Gentleman*. Wherever people gathered in a company there was singing. Country gentlemen and well-to-do merchants assembled their households after supper for glee-singing. In one of the dialogues which Elizabethan children were set to learn we have a picture of such a scene. The merchant has supped sumptuously with his family and guests, fifteen or sixteen in all, and when the

tables have been cleared he says to his son, " Roland, shall we have a song ? " " Yea, sir," answers Roland. " Where bee your bookes of musicke, for they bee the best corrected ? " " They bee in my chest," answers the father. " Katherin, take the key of my closet, you shal find them a litle til the left hand." Katherin fetches them, and the citizen offers them to the company, saying, " Behold, ther bee faire songes at fouer partes." " Who shall sing with me ? " asks Roland, and the father replies, " You shall have companie enough. David shall make the base, Jhon the tenor, and James the treble. Begin, James, take your tune."

The wild young gallants of the town, the actors, poets, university students, and sons of rich merchants, when they met at the taverns not only trolled out their rollicking drinking songs, but sang with the keenest enjoyment and most delicate modulation a dainty lyric like *Cupid and my Campaspe played at Cards for Kisses* or a pathetic one like *Weep ye no more, Sad Fountains.*

Morley, in his *History of Music*, written in 1597, tells of the discomfiture of a youth who went to supper at a friend's house and was found to be lacking in this general accomplishment. " Supper being ended," he says,

> music books, as is the custom, were brought to the tables, the mistress of the house presented me with a part, earnestly requesting me to sing ; but when after many excuses, I protested unfeignedly that *I could not* every one began to wonder, yea, some whispering to others demanding how I was brought up. . . . I go now, to seek mine old friend, Master Griorimus, to make myself his scholar.

Among the poorer people in the cottages it was the same. Peele in his *Old Wives' Tale* tells how Clunch the blacksmith is sitting with three neighbours round the fire after supper when one of the guests says to another named Frolic, " I am sure thou art not without some round or other ; no doubt but Clunch can bear his part," and Frolic replies, " Else think you me ill brought up." So they begin :

> When as the rye reach to the chin
> And chopcherry, chopcherry ripe within.

In all withdrawing rooms a lute or a cittern was hung up for the use of visitors, so that if a gallant called upon his lady-love before she had finished the elaborate toilet which the fashion of the day required he might solace himself with music; and the lady and her maid would presently hear, not groans and sighs of impatience, but the strains of some melting love-song:

> Ah! were she pitiful as she is fair,
> Or but as mild as she is seeming so;

or, perhaps, the blither

> Phyllida is a fair maid.

If Ralph, the grocer's apprentice, went into the barber's shop that his hair might be cut to the regulation length there he would see a cittern, and forthwith he would take it down and begin a song with some good, noisy refrain, such as,

> It was the frog in the well,
> Humbledum, humbledum,
> And the merry mouse in the mill,
> Tweedle, tweedle, twino.

And his companions, both those who were waiting with him and those whose heads were already under the scissors, would join in tunefully, each taking his proper part.

Each trade and occupation had its special songs and catches. Pedlars travelling the countryside, though perhaps they were not all as delightful as the tuneful Autolycus, advertised their wares, as he did, with a song.

> Will you buy any tape,
> Or lace for your cape,
> My dainty duck, my dear-a?
> Any silk, any thread,
> Any toys for your head
> Of the newest and finest, finest wear-a?

The bellman going his rounds sang:

> Maids, to bed and cover coal,
> Let the mouse out of her hole.

The cooper as he passed along the street sang :

A cooper I am and have been long,
And hooping is my trade,
And married I am to as pretty a wench
As ever God hath made.
Have ye work for a cooper ?

There were rustic festivals, such as the sheep-shearing which Shakespeare describes in *The Winter's Tale*, and there too there was singing ; perhaps,

Fair and fair, and twice so fair,
As fair as any may be ;
The fairest shepherd on our green,
A love for any lady.

At haymaking time they sang :

Haymakers, rakers, reapers, and mowers,
Wait on your Summer Queen.

And when the corn was carried :

Lo, here we come a-reaping, a-reaping,
To reap our harvest fruit.

Robert Laneham, telling of the " bunch of ballads and songs, all auncient," belonging to Captain Cox, mentions seven of them, *Broom, Broom on Hill, So well is me begone, troly-lo !, O'er a Whinny, Meg, Hey ding a ding, Bonny Lass upon a Green, My Bonny One gave me a Kiss, On a Bank as I lay.*

The first and last of these, with nine others, are included in a list recited by Morus, the fool, in a " very merry and Pythie Commedie," called *The Longer thou Livest the More Fool thou art*, written 1568. Morus explains that his mother taught him these and many others when he was " wont in her lappe to sit " ; and " Whan I walk by myself alone," he goes on,

It doth me good my songs to render,
Such pretie thinges would soon begon,
If I should not some time them remember.

These ballads did not come out of the miscellanies and song-books. They were probably published in the form of

broadsides—that is, they were roughly printed on one side of a single sheet of coarse paper, often adorned with a crude woodcut. Many of the ballads dealt with some contemporary event—a victory, a public calamity, a murder, a piece of foreign news—and though most of them had a swing and a lilt which gave a certain pleasure to the ear they were, with a few exceptions, a very inferior type of Elizabethan song. As the practice of singing spread to the lower classes these ballads began to be produced all over the country in numbers so great as to excite scorn and indignation among certain people whose superior taste they disgusted.

> I lothe to speke it, every red-nosed rhymester is an author; every drunken man's dream is a book; and he whose talent of little wit is hardly worth a farthing yet layeth about him so outrageously as if all Helicon had run through his pen; in a word, scarce a cat can look out of a gutter, but out starts a halfpenny chronicler, and presently a proper new ballet of a strange sight is indited.

So wrote Bishop Hall in 1592, and in 1597 he was scarcely less contemptuous in verse:

> There are ten-groat rhymers
> About the town, grown fat on these occasions.
> Let but a chapel fall, or street be fired,
> A foolish lover hang himself for pure love,
> Or any such like accident, and before
> They are cold in the graves, some damn'd ditty's made;
> Which makes their ghosts walk.

But the ballad-makers cared little for the wrath of dignitaries so long as their wares pleased the common people and the halfpennies and pennies came rolling in.

So many contemporary writers have told us about the Elizabethan ballad-sellers and ballad-buyers that it is quite easy for us to picture one of the little scenes that were taking place every day at street corners and in open spaces at fairs and festivals, all over Elizabethan England. Here, for example, comes a ballad-seller and takes his stand just by Temple Bar at nine o'clock on a fine spring morning. He is a ragged fellow, with "an ale-crammed nose" and a good, lusty bass voice, and he carries a great bundle of broadsheets under his arm.

"Come, buy a daintie fine ballad," he cries. "I have *Chipping Norton, A Mile from Chappell o' the Heath, A Lamentable Ballad of Burning the Pope's Dog, The Sweet Ballad of the Lincolnshire Bagpipes,* and *Peggy and Willie,*

> "But now he is dead and gone,
> Mine own sweet Willie is laid in his grave,
> La la la, lan ti dan dan da din,
> Dan ti dan, dan tan derry do."

The refrain booms out over the noises of the street, and a few people stand still to listen—a porter, with a huge bundle on his back, a tinker with all the paraphernalia of his trade, an orange-woman, an apprentice who ought to be hurrying on his master's errands, a countryman seeing the sights of London, an oyster-wife, one or two tattered idlers, and a few respectable citizens on the edge of the crowd. Encouraged by this gathering, the ballad-monger proceeds to cry a still more alluring sample of his wares. "Buy a most true and dreadful story of a woman possessed with the devil," he cries, holding up a broadside on which is a fearsome picture of a raging but decapitated bear, "who in the likeness of a headless bear fetched her out of her bed and in the presence of seven persons most strangely rolled her through three chambers and down a high pair of stairs on the four and twentieth of May last, at Watchet in Somersetshire." This sounds really interesting. More people stop, and a few hand in their pennies. The constable near by, whose duty it is to keep his eye on evildoers, is so absorbed in listening to the terrible story that a cutpurse ventures to approach the equally entranced countryman and skilfully relieves him of his purse.

"Here is a proper new ballad," singsongs the fellow, waving on high another broadsheet, "but lately made, by the title of *The Babes in the Wood,* the Norfolk gentleman his Will and Testament, and how he committed the keeping of his children to his own brother who dealt most wickedly with them, and how God plagued him for it. 'Tis a doleful story to delight you, an you will listen to it." And he proceeds to sing it, his audience hanging upon his words.

When he has finished there is a rush to buy the new ballad,

and pennies come rattling in. The crowd presses round and examines his stock. "Hast a good drinking song, fellow?" cries the tinker, and the ballad-monger with an "Aye, truly," hands him a sheet from his stock and takes his penny; and soon the tinker is sitting in a tavern near by, a pot of good ale between his legs, and shouting with great enjoyment, "Hey, jolly Jenkyn, I see a knave a drinking."

The countryman chooses several of the sheets—*The Babes in the Wood*, *The True and most Dreadful Discourse*, *A Ballad of the Armada*, and *There were Three Ravens sat on a Tree*—meaning to paste them up on the walls of his parlour at home, where he has already a stock of similar ones bought at fairs. But when he comes to pay he finds his purse gone, and the ballad-singer at once unceremoniously reclaims the sheets, for he gives no credit; and after an appeal to the constable and a great deal of noise the poor countryman goes sadly away.

The apprentice buys *The Ballad of Hieronimo*, founded on Kyd's *Spanish Tragedy*, which he had seen and gloated over a week before. A dainty page, in his lady's livery, trips up and buys *The Country Mouse* for the maidens of the household to sing as they sit at their spinning. And here comes one in the dress of a jester—surely he is very like our old friend Touchstone—who buys *The Ballad of Sir Oliver*, and goes off singing the refrain,

> O sweet Oliver!
> O brave Oliver!
> Leave me not behind thee.

Next steps forward a comely, bright-eyed dame—is it Mistress Ford of *The Merry Wives* who has come up from Windsor to spend her husband's substance on the new ruffs and farthingales that are to be bought in the enticing London shops? She turns over the ballads till she comes to *Greensleeves*—not new, but always a favourite, and set to a delightful air:

> Greensleeves was all my joy,
> Greensleeves was my delight,
> Greensleeves was my heart of gold,
> And who but Lady Greensleeves?

All through the morning the pedlar keeps his place, singing, and crying his wares. Most of the people who pass, especially those of the poorer class, stop a few moments to listen, and many buy one of his ballads; and when noon comes he counts up his pennies with much satisfaction, and goes off contentedly to his dinner.

CHAPTER XVII

LONDONERS AND THE DRAMA

WHEN Elizabeth came to the throne the playgoing habit was firmly and widely established among the English people. It had been steadily strengthening since the beginning of the century, and though it had been disturbed by the religious troubles of Queen Mary's reign it had not been seriously affected. As soon as Elizabeth's strong and settled government brought internal peace all the activities of the country were quickened, and none showed a greater increase of vigour than this same playgoing habit.

It was, naturally, most marked in the towns, and especially in London. There performances were so frequent, and the audiences that gathered to witness them so large, that it was impossible for the players to use any longer the market squares and open spaces of the city. The guild halls and similar buildings were open to them and were frequently used, but after a time it was found that the best place for the performance of a play was the yard of one of the old inns. These yards were large rectangular spaces surrounded by the inn-buildings. They were approached by one or more archways made through the lower story of these buildings. Round the upper story ran a gallery upon which the rooms of the inn opened, but which could also be reached by an external staircase. Between the pillars that supported one side of the gallery the stage was put up, projecting into the yard. The gallery above it was used to represent heaven, a balcony, an upper room, or any other scene required by the play; the rooms behind were the actors' dressing-rooms. Such of the audience as were willing to pay the charge—probably about sixpence—sat in the three sides of the gallery not required by the actors, the rest paid a penny or twopence and stood in the yard, in front, and at the sides of the stage.

The first performances of which any mention has come

down to us took place in 1557. We hear of the suppression of a " lewd play " that had been acted at the Boar's Head, Aldgate, and of a Protestant minister being burnt for holding a service at the Saracen's Head, Islington, on pretence of going to see *A Sackfull of News* that was being acted there. It is probable, however, that the practice of playing in inn-yards began some years earlier. It had not entirely died out even at the end of the century, for in 1594 the mother of Anthony Bacon (brother of Francis) lamented that her son had settled in Bishopsgate on account of its neighbourhood to the Bull Inn, where plays and interludes were continually acted, and would, she imagined, corrupt his servants.

The audiences were made up of Londoners of every class—London men, that is to say, for few women, except those belonging to the lowest orders, ever came to the play. Many of the old acting companies still wandered about the country, but several of the most famous now played only in London, where individual actors were beginning to gain a name and reputation. There was Richard Tarlton, who acted in the " jigges " or short comic pieces that it was the custom to give after the longer play. Tarlton is said to have been a short, flat-nosed, merry fellow, who played on the pipe and the tabor, sang, danced, and made impromptu verses, and in all was so irresistibly droll that he kept his large audiences rocking with laughter all the time that he was on the stage. Edward Alleyn, the famous player of tragic parts, acted at the Crosskeys, Gracechurch Street, and James Burbage, the head of Lord Leicester's famous company, at the Bull in Bishopsgate.

For the first twenty years of Elizabeth's reign the moralities and interludes still held the stage. But the audiences were making it plain that these, even in an altered and developed form, did not content them. These vigorous, keen-witted, alert Elizabethans had outgrown the medieval taste for allegory. For man, as Humanum Genus, the type, they felt little enthusiasm ; they kept their eager interest for man as an individual. They clamoured for life, real life in all its aspects. Their imaginations roamed through

spaces wider and more splendid than had come into the vision of their forefathers. The task for the playwright was to lift real life into these imagined realms and show it, real still, but transfigured.

It was an eventful day for the playgoers when one afternoon they crowded to a certain inn-yard—the exact date and the place are unknown—to see a play called *Ralph Roister Doister*. Its author was Nicholas Udall, headmaster of Westminster School, who had written it to be played by his scholars. At first there seemed to be little to mark it out from the witty, well-written interludes of which the audience was beginning to tire. The Prologue announced:

> Our comedy or interlude which we intend to play,
> Is named *Roister Doister* indeed,
> Which against the vain-glorious doth inveigh,
> Whose humour the roisting sort continually doth feed.

But as the play went on various differences began to appear. The chief character was Ralph Roister Doister, a wealthy, boasting, swaggering coward, who was in love with a beautiful widow, Custance, privately betrothed to the yeoman, Goodlucke. Ralph confided his love to Matthew Merrygreeke, a penniless rogue, who, partly in the hope of reward, but chiefly for the fun of the thing, incited the wealthy braggart to make high-handed proposals to the widow. First he sent a message by Custance's old nurse, then by his own servant, then by Merrygreeke, and all these were rejected so decisively that at last he was overcome with anger and disappointment and began to blubber, declaring that he should die. The mischievous Merrygreeke persuaded him to go himself to see the widow ; and then followed the incident, which has become famous, of the misreading of poor Ralph's love-letter, prepared with the help of a professional scribe. Merrygreeke, by altering the punctuation, gave a meaning quite different from the one intended. The letter began :

> For (as I hear say) such your conditions are
> That ye be worthy favour, of no living man
> To be abhorred, of every honest man
> To be taken for a woman, inclined to vice
> Nothing at all, to virtue given.

It will easily be seen that when Merrygreeke read this, putting the stop at the end of each line, the widow had much reason to be displeased ; and so it went on all through a long letter. The play ended with an assault made by Ralph and his men—again prompted by Merrygreeke—on the house of Custance, and a grand repulse, with distaffs and mops, by the widow's band of delightful, high-spirited serving-maids.

There were two things about this play that struck the audience as being different from anything they had seen before. First, it had a clearly marked form, being divided into acts and scenes, after the fashion of the old classical plays on which it was modelled. This gave a sense of time, a sense of place, a sense of development ; the play was a complete story, not an episode, or a series of episodes loosely connected. Next, the characters were real men and women. The tradespeople and workmen and apprentices who stood in the inn-yard felt that they could have lived in intimacy with these people, have laughed and jested with them as with their actual neighbours. The theme was trivial, arousing no very great interest, but the treatment of it was something new. The audience gave its verdict in favour of the play, which is our first English comedy.

On January 18, 1562—which was probably a little later than this performance—the gentlemen of the Inner Temple acted before the Queen the play of *Gorboduc*, which is our earliest English tragedy. Like *Ralph Roister Doister*, it was divided into acts and scenes and had for its characters real people, not abstractions. It retained the Chorus and the dumb-show of its Greek original, and was written in blank verse. These two plays may be regarded as marking the starting, or, better, perhaps, the turning-point of English comedy and tragedy. They set the drama upon the road which was to lead to the plays of Shakespeare.

A crowd of professional dramatists soon arose to carry on the work thus begun. They wrote tragedies and comedies, mainly based on classical models. They translated and adapted the works of the old Greek and Roman authors, as well as modern French, Spanish, and Italian plays. They made dramas founded on mythological tales, on histories

and chronicles, on incidents of the day, on public events and domestic catastrophes.

For a time no work met with any very marked success. To win the favour of an audience of Elizabethan Londoners was no easy matter. They applauded what they liked and cried down what they did not like so very emphatically that no playwright could possibly miss or mistake their verdict. They came to the play with the fixed intention of giving that verdict and making it effective; and they did so. The Londoners it was who shaped the drama and gave it that particular character which we call Elizabethan. The London audiences decided what should be the nature and scope of the drama; the playwrights wrote their plays in accordance with the clearly expressed views of the people. They interpreted these views in their own royal fashion, and they used to the full their author's privilege of presenting and suggesting new ideas, but they took care to give the people what they asked for. Even Shakespeare wrote with an eye on the audience.

But the playwrights and playgoers were not to have things all their own way in Elizabeth's good city of London. There were among its citizens an increasing number of Puritans, and these hated stage-plays as an invention of the Devil. They were a comparatively small body, but their zeal and conviction made them dangerous. They wrote tracts and pamphlets and preached sermons, all setting out the iniquity of these public performances; and if the Queen and Court had not been on the side of the players, they would have been driven from the City. The Corporation of London was strictly Puritan in its sympathies, and in December 1575 this body drew up a memorial declaring that "sundry great disorders and inconveniences have been found to ensue to this city by the inordinate haunting of great multitudes of people, specially youth, to plays, interludes, and shows." Quarrels, disturbances, drunkenness, immorality of every kind, disregard of the Sabbath, waste of money, seditious speeches—all, they affirmed, followed in the wake of these ungodly exhibitions, and in time of plague the danger of infection was enormously increased by them.

PART OF AN OLD MAP OF LONDON, SHOWING FOUR THEATRES ON THE BANKSIDE, SOUTHWARK

The four theatres, indicated by flags, are the Swan, Hope, Rose, and Globe. The early theatres were usually built either in Shoreditch or on the Bankside, where they were out of reach of the civic authorities. This was in consequence of a law which decreed that all players not in the service of a lord should be treated as rogues and vagabonds.

Therefore the Corporation decided that certain restrictions should be laid upon the acting of plays, the chief being that all plays and players must be licensed by the Lord Mayor and Aldermen, and that there should be no performances on Sundays or in times of general sickness.

Next year the attack was renewed. The players in despair sent up a petition dealing with the objections of the Corporation point by point. But the Mayor and Aldermen would not give way; and though the Queen sympathized with the players, and helped them by commanding royal performances and by giving special permission to companies on various occasions, it was not in accordance with her policy to enter into an avoidable dispute with an ancient and powerful body such as the Corporation of London. The enemy triumphed, and it became increasingly difficult to obtain permission to present a play within the City bounds.

Seeing, therefore, no way in which they could bring about the withdrawal of the obnoxious order, the players sought a means by which they could make themselves independent of it. James Burbage, father of the more famous Richard, took the lead. To the north of the City, just beyond the walls, lay Finsbury Fields, used by Londoners for sport and recreation. It was outside the jurisdiction of the Mayor, and here Burbage built for his company a permanent theatre. The Court and the citizens could reach this theatre almost as easily as they could reach the inn-yards, and the new building, though it was modelled on the inn-yard, was larger, more commodious, and better suited to its purpose.

Burbage's example was followed by other companies of actors, and before the end of the year two more theatres had been built, one—the Curtain—in Shoreditch, the other—the Blackfriars—close by Blackfriars Church. The Puritans stormed and denounced, but the players could now afford to disregard them. They were safe from actual interference, the Queen showed them favour and encouragement, and, best of all, the audiences grew larger and larger. New writers and actors came forward for their entertainment, and the work of shaping the Elizabethan drama went merrily on.

By this time it had become clear that plays written on the

classical model did not on the whole suit the English taste. The plan was too set and formal, there was too much action off the stage, the speeches and explanations were too lengthy, the Chorus was felt to cause a slackening of the interest. The classical play passed, but it left its mark on the drama that came after it. It had introduced ideas of form and symmetry; it had accustomed men's ears to high sentiments expressed in dignified language, and had banished the trivialities of the medieval playwrights.

For the next twelve or fourteen years the stage was mainly supplied by a group of writers who were known as "the University Wits"—Lyly, Peele, Lodge, Nash, Kyd, Greene, and Marlowe. They travelled farther and farther from the classical model, and treated their subjects with a freedom that pleased the English taste. They evolved various new types of plays, and the audiences gave each a greater or less amount of applause.

A play that had been well received by the Londoners was almost always, by command of the Queen, brought to the Court. Elizabeth, when she had issued a royal patent to Lord Leicester's Company in 1574, had licensed them

> to use, exercise, and occupy the art and faculty of playing comedies, tragedies, interludes, stage-plays, and such other like, . . . as well for the recreation of our loving subjects, as for our solace and pleasure when we shall think good to see them.

The opportunity of playing before the Queen was highly valued by the companies.

On the other hand, plays produced at Court often came later to the public theatres. John Lyly's plays, of which the first, *Campaspe*, was acted in 1581 by the children of the Chapel Royal, were enthusiastically received at Court. They were nearly all founded on legends of the gods and goddesses, and the pretty story was treated in a light, graceful, artificial style that appealed to the high-born ladies and gentlemen of the Queen's train. But when they came to Blackfriars the plays were not so highly appreciated. The people, we are sure, liked their dainty prettiness and liked especially the lovely lyrics that were scattered through them. But they were somewhat too slight for the general

taste, and lacking in movement and interest, and they seem never to have become really popular.

Of a very different type was a new play, first acted in 1586, which had at once a tremendous success. It was called *The Spanish Tragedy*, and was the work of Thomas Kyd.

> There is a ghost in it, crying out Revenge! *Vindicta!* as it stalks about the stage. There is a noble and courageous lover, traitorously murdered. There is a generous, open-hearted gentleman, old Hieronymo, forced to work out his plot of vengeance by craft, and crazy with intolerable wrongs. There is a consummate villain, Lorenzo, who uses paid assassins, broken courtiers and needy men-at-arms as instruments in schemes of secret malice. There is a beautiful and injured lady, Bellimperia, whose part is one romantic tissue of love, passion, pathos and unmerited suffering. There is a play within the play, used to facilitate the bloody climax. There are scenes of extravagant insanity, relieved by scenes of euphuistic love-making in sequestered gardens; scenes of martial conflict followed by pompous shows at Court; kings, generals, clowns, cut-throats, chamberlains, jostling together in a masquerade medley, a carnival of swiftly-moving puppets. There are at least five murders, two suicides, two judicial executions, and one death in duel. The principal personage, Hieronymo, bites out his tongue and flings it on the stage; stabs his enemy with a stiletto, and pierces his own heart. Few of the characters survive to bury the dead, and these few are of secondary importance in the action.

This is John Addington Symonds' admirable summing-up of *The Spanish Tragedy*, and as we read it the scene rises before us. We can see the theatre packed with Elizabethan men and boys—no cultured, well-mannered audience, but a boisterous crowd full of the zest of living, eager, quick-witted, imaginative. We can see their interest quicken and their excitement rise as scene after scene of this robust, full-blooded play is enacted before them. Here is no chilly pageant of ghostly abstractions, taking uneasy shape in flesh; here are no alien gods and goddesses with their dainty loves and their studied speeches. Here is the variety and breadth and turmoil of real life. Here are good strong human passions, love and hate such as each man may feel for his friend or his enemy; anger, jealousy, revenge, working fiercely and openly to tragic ends.

The Elizabethans were not squeamish, and the orgy of

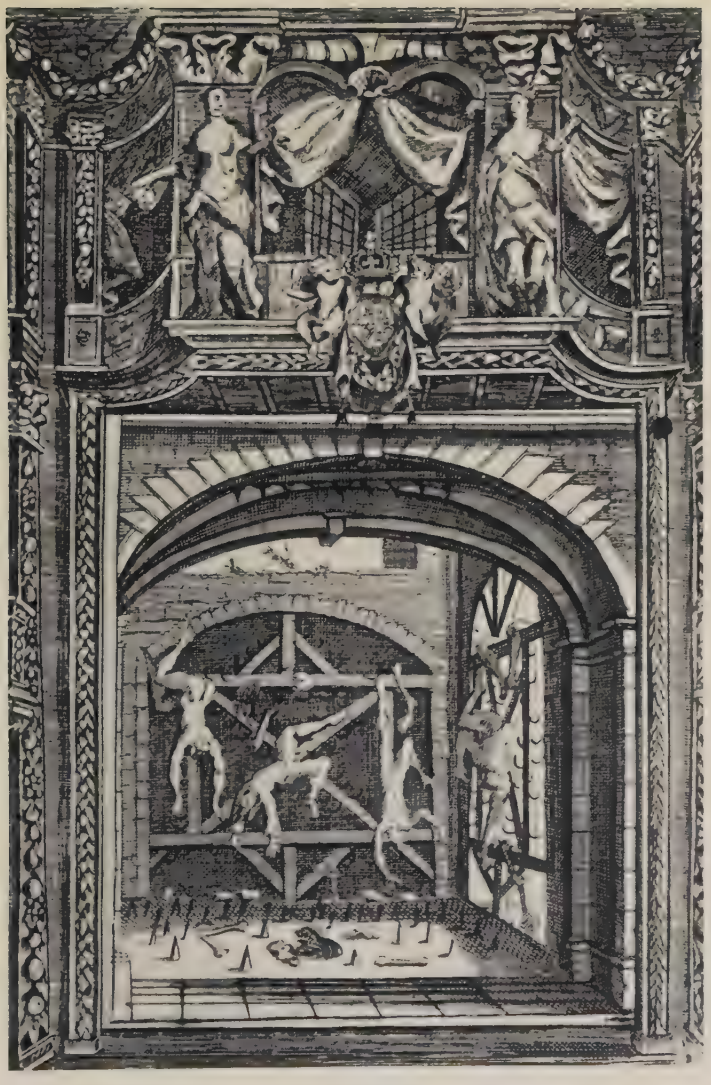
blood did not disgust them. The real power of the play gripped them, its high-sounding lines delighted their ears. They went home full of its praises, and came again and again to see it ; and they watched eagerly for the announcement of another play of a similar character. The " tragedy of blood," as this type of play came to be called, was strong meat, but it was to their taste.

They had not to wait long for further opportunities of satisfying this taste. Playwrights hastened to supply the fare demanded. Events of the day—robberies and murders and horrid crimes of every description—were turned into plays ; histories and chronicles were ransacked to provide further material ; literature, ancient and modern, was overhauled. *Titus Andronicus*, which was perhaps the first play in which Shakespeare had a hand, is a supreme example of the tragedy of blood, and was as popular as *The Spanish Tragedy*.

The plays were acted with a crude realism that would disgust any audience of to-day, but which our stronger-nerved forefathers apparently found only stimulating. About 1592 was acted a play by George Peele called *The Battle of Alcazar*, of which Mr W. W. Greg has recently published a sixteenth-century stage abridgement, with illuminating marginal notes. It was founded on a contemporary incident connected with a rising in Portugal, and had some very stirring scenes. Mr Greg says :

> In one three Furies, three ghosts (spirits of characters in the play, previously slain), and three devils appear on the stage, while Nemesis looks down from the balcony. Three of the characters are in turn haled in by the Furies, butchered on the stage, and so borne out again. A marginal note records that three vialls of blood and a sheep's gather are required. Since a gather consists of the liver, heart, and lungs, we are presumably to infer that one of these organs was to be torn out of each of the unhappy trio in this gory performance.

In the year of the Armada came the announcement of a play called *Tamburlaine*, by Christopher Marlowe. Its full title was *Tamburlaine the Great, who from a Scythian Shephearde by his Rare and Wonderfull Conquests became a most Puissant and Mightye Monarque, and (for his Tyranny and*



Scene from "The Empress of Morocco"

A "tragedy of blood" published in 1673.

Terrour in Warre) *was tearmed the Scourge of God.* It sounded sufficiently novel and bloodthirsty, and the Londoners flocked to see it. They found it exciting beyond their hopes. It was an extravagant, tempestuous play, full of wild bombast and rhetoric ; its verse was high-sounding and splendid, such as the Elizabethans loved ; and its theme—the insistent longing of a wild and restless spirit for adventure and glory and dominion—had all their sympathy. When Edward Alleyn, who took the part of Tamburlaine, spoke the lines,

> Nature . . .
> Doth teach us all to have aspiring mindes,
> Still climing after knowledge infinite,
> And alwaies moving as the restlesse spheares,

he had the whole house with him.

Scene followed scene in a riot of passion and terror. The audience saw a mighty king brought before them in the cage in which his ruthless conqueror had imprisoned him ; saw him released only to form a footstool for that conqueror ; saw him later seek death by beating his head against his prison-bars. They watched the terrible Tamburlaine mourning piteously over his dead wife ; watched him gash his arm with a sword to teach his sons that " a wound is nothing " ; watched him finally as, mad with triumph, he rode round the stage in a chariot drawn by five kings, bitted and bridled, whom he lashed with his heavy whip and addressed in the words that have been famous from that day to our own, " Holla, ye pampered jades of Asia ! "

Tamburlaine was another great theatrical success, and Marlowe became the favourite of the playgoing public. He wrote three more tragedies for them—*Doctor Faustus*, *The Jew of Malta*, and *Edward II*—in which he rose to higher levels than in *Tamburlaine* and left some of his riot and bombast behind him.

These turbulent performances did not spoil the taste of the London audiences for the quieter, more idyllic plays of such writers as Greene and Lodge. Greene's *Friar Bacon and Friar Bungay* was almost as popular as *Tamburlaine.* The public loved its two rival magicians, its comic scenes, with

Miles, the Oxford scholar, and the Devil, and especially its charming love-story, showing how Edward, Prince of Wales, courted the fair maid of Fressingfield, Margaret, the keeper's daughter. These love-scenes were laid in a Suffolk village, and are full of the freshness and beauty and " sweet content " of the country ; and the Londoners were quick to recognize and appreciate their charm.

Many other plays they saw in those late years of the sixteenth century—tragedies, comedies, chronicle-plays, domestic dramas, fantastic plays like Peele's *Old Wives' Tale*, and sternly realistic ones like *A Woman kilde with Kindness* —even some morals and interludes of the later type. To all they gave a measure of appreciation and much frank criticism, gradually forming that fine taste which was soon to be exercised on the masterpieces of Shakespeare.

The bombastic tragedy was revived after the Restoration, when Elkanah Settle's *Empress of Morocco* had a great success. A set of engravings was published with the play in 1673, and these form the best pictorial record that we have of this type of play.

CHAPTER XVIII

A PERFORMANCE OF "JULIUS CÆSAR," 1601

PRITHEE, good wife, see thou to it that to-morrow the dinner be ready on the stroke of noon. I have a mind to see Master Shakespeare's new play of *Julius Cæsar* at the Globe."

"Never fret about your dinner, goodman. I am no sluggard. At noon the meat is ever on the board. And so the players will show *Julius Cæsar* to-morrow. I warrant me 'tis a right merry play."

"Nay, wife, thou hast missed the mark. 'Tis a tragedy. Heard'st not the criers yesterday, and seest not the bill set up on yonder post, how its letters are all of red? I would fain see another tragedy of Will's. I liked his *Romeo and Juliet* well. So see that all is ready, dame, for I must start betimes."

The goodwife promised, but she shook her head in disapproval as she turned away. Truth to tell, she loved not the playhouse. Was not her father, the worshipful Master Richard Appleyard, an Alderman of the City, whose zeal in the matter of the late decree was well known? Often in private gossip with her godly neighbours did she deplore the ill-fortune that had made this play-actor, William Shakespeare, a native of her husband's own birthplace, the town of Stratford-on-Avon. But for this, she believed, the love of the playhouse would never have taken hold upon the sober, industrious draper of Cornhill, who was not lightly led away, and stood high in the esteem of all men. But to him she had been careful to say no word of censure since the day when, repeating some words of her father's, she had spoken of Master Shakespeare as a rogue and a vagabond. Simon was a good husband and a kind, but his wrath at this misnaming of a man who was well respected in his native town had affrighted his peace-loving wife. So now she forbore to

speak her mind, and obediently brushed and put ready the dark blue doublet, the hose, and leather belt and long cloak in which a prosperous citizen was wont to go abroad in the days of Elizabeth; but she hoped devoutly that Master Shakespeare would write no more plays to tempt good, sober tradesmen like her husband to the wicked playhouse.

Next day, soon after the great clock of St Paul's had struck one, Simon Nocker stepped forth from his shop in Cornhill into the street. The goodwife had been punctual, and there was no need to hurry, so he walked in leisurely fashion down Cornhill, past the Royal Exchange, which he remembered had just been a-building when he came up to London thirty years ago. Then, turning into Walbrook, he walked slowly down to the river, considering as he went whether he should walk over London Bridge or should hire a waterman to row him straight to where the Globe Theatre showed its rounded top on the opposite bank. The afternoon was mild and pleasant, and all good citizens were proud of their famous bridge. Simon Nocker turned from the shouting watermen and made his way toward it.

"Give you good day, Master Nocker. Art going to see the new play?"

Simon turned. "Why, what is this?" he said. "Good day to you, Master Yarford, and you too, Master Cheney. You're for the Globe, I warrant me. Ne'er saw I aught like to the youths of this day. Needs must they off to the playhouse as though they were grown men. What says the goodman your father to these diversions?"

The boy—he was about sixteen—laughed out merrily, and his companion, who was a few years older, joined in so loudly that passers-by stopped to look at the little group—the sober citizen and the two youths dressed in the gaily coloured livery of the Earl of Essex and wearing his badge on their arms.

"My father," said the boy, "would call me, as indeed he hath done many times ere now, scamp and good-for-nought; yet he too loveth the playhouse, though for fear of his godly friends he durst not avow so much. He is stolen away to-day, an I mistake not, for passing the house we thrice threw

small stones at his window, and he answered not. He hath left his books and gone after Master Shakespeare. I warrant me my eyes shall spy him out, be he never so becloaked and muffled."

"Come thou across the bridge with us, Master Nocker," said the other lad. "All the world is out to-day. My lord of Essex is abroad, and we have leave until the supper hour. Come thou with us, and thou shalt pay a penny for each, that we may go into the pit. Lacking that, it must e'en be the twopenny gallery." And again he laughed loudly.

Master Simon Nocker laughed too. He was a merry man at heart, and loved the company of the young and mirthful. "On then," he said. "Ne'er wilt thou lack a penny an one may be had for the asking. 'Tis in earning thou art backward."

They passed on to the bridge, where a crowd of foot-passengers jostled each other amid horses and coaches and carts loaded with merchandise. In front of them was the Globe, the great "wooden O" that had stood on the Bankside for more than a year with its sign—the figure of Hercules supporting the world on his back. At half-past one on this fine October afternoon the scene around the theatre was a lively one. People anxious to get a good place for the performance were already arriving in large numbers. Some gentlemen came on horseback, and each of these had to choose from the group of ragged, clamorous boys one to whom he would entrust his horse while he was inside the theatre. The vendors of oranges, nuts, and tobacco cried their wares in shrill tones, and did a brisk trade.

Master Nocker and the two lads made their way through the crowd, and found themselves inside the famous Globe Theatre. It is, perhaps, hardly correct to say "inside," for the structure was open to the sky, except for a canopy that extended over the stage. In the centre was a large open space covered with what had perhaps originally been turf, but which, trodden by hundreds of feet, showed nothing now but bare brown soil. This was the pit, or yard. Into it projected the stage, a rough erection, of very moderate size compared to the stages of the present day. At the back of the stage there were two pillars, supporting a small balcony.

On a level with this was a gallery passing round the theatre, divided into separate compartments or "rooms"—the equivalent of our modern boxes. Below this ran another similar to it, and above was the "twopenny gallery."

Master Nocker, having good-naturedly paid the pennies that would enable his young companions to comply with the demand "One penny at the gate, another at the entry of the scaffold, and a third for quiet standing," paid a shilling on his own behalf, and took his way toward the more dignified "rooms." There wanted yet some quarter of an hour to the beginning of the performance, and there were still a few empty seats. Our good draper looked around him with lively interest. He had looked out over a similar scene many times before, but his delight was almost as fresh and quite as keen as it had been on the first of these occasions. Master Simon Nocker had the Elizabethan love of movement and colour and variety, and he found life—even the life of a draper on Cornhill—intensely interesting, sometimes even exciting. He felt his pulses stir pleasantly as he regarded the house, packed with a noisy crowd of men and boys drawn from all classes of society. There were a few ladies in the "rooms," but these were masked, and kept themselves in as retired a position as possible. Down in the pit girls and women without masks jostled the men and joined in the loud talking and jesting that was going on, but even here they formed comparatively only a very small part of the audience. The pit was the centre of the life of the house. There fruit-sellers were crying their wares, drinks were being passed round. Apprentices were cracking nuts and throwing the shells at such members of the audience as their fancy selected; here and there groups were dicing or playing at cards, sometimes quarrelling loudly over their play. There was singing, shouting, and swearing. Every one seemed in boisterous good-humour and bent on making himself as conspicuous as might be among his fellows.

Simon Nocker looked round to see what had become of the son of his worthy neighbour, Master Yarford. There he was, with his companion. By a free use of elbows, or perhaps by even more questionable methods, they had worked their way

into a position opposite the middle of the stage. They had apparently found a few coins in the purses they had declared so empty, for they were eating oranges and cracking nuts at a great rate, disposing of the skin and shells in the manner commonly favoured by the "groundlings." At such times as their mouths were not so full as to make utterance impossible they sang lustily the doggerel verses composed concerning the late decree:

> List unto my ditty.
> Alas, the more the pity,
> From Troynovant's[1] fair city
> The Aldermen and Mayor
> Have driven each poor player.

In the midst of these amusements young Yarford was moved to twitch the cap from the head of one of his neighbours and toss it to the "rooms" above; whereat a great commotion ensued, and there was much hustling and pushing and shouting—yet with little ill-will—amid the partisans on each side until the hat was restored. Then suddenly a more serious tumult arose. Master Nocker leaned forward to see what was happening. The cry of "Cutpurse" soon enlightened him. A man had been found plying his trade of pickpocket among the crowd gathered in the pit, and now he was being very roughly handled. His situation was a dangerous one, for an Elizabethan audience was not as a rule backward in taking the law into its own hands in such cases. But luckily at this moment the trumpet announcing the beginning of the performance was sounded. The audience was keenly interested in the play, and unwilling to lose any part of it; therefore the cutpurse, sadly mauled and almost fainting with fright, was thrust roughly outside the door and there left, just as the trumpet was sounding for the third time.

The curtain that hung before the stage opened in the middle and was drawn back, showing a company of gallants entering with much bustle and ceremony and finding seats for themselves upon the stage. They were dressed in the

[1] A name used for London in allusion to the tradition that it was founded by Brute, nephew of Æneas of Troy, the reputed ancestor of the Romans.

most costly mode of the day. Instead of hose they wore stockings and breeches, padded to such an extent that the natural shape of their bodies was quite lost. Their short coats were made of bright-hued satin and velvet, slashed and trimmed, stiffened and laced, in the most elaborate fashion. Their shoes were "clogged with silk of all colours, with birds, fowls, beasts, and antiques pourtrayed all over," and had absurdly high heels. They wore much jewellery—rings and bracelets and earrings—and were so highly perfumed that the odour of musk and of civet reached and offended the noses of the groundlings, who did not hesitate to express their disgust by loud caterwaulings and hisses. These were the exquisites of the City and the Court, who had paid half a crown, or even five shillings, for the privilege of bringing a stool on the stage, and sitting there, attended by their servants, who were almost as finely dressed as their masters. There was a great hubbub as the members of this gorgeous company settled in their places; for it was not the right thing for a man of fashion to make his appearance until the play was on the point of beginning. Says Dekker in his *Gull's Hornbook*:

> Present not yourself on the stage, especially at a new play, until the quaking Prologue hath (by rubbing) got colour into his cheekes, and is ready to give the trumpets their cue, that he is upon point to enter; for then it is time as though you were one of the properties, or that you dropped out of ye hangings.

"The quaking Prologue" had entered and was trying to make himself heard before these young gallants had settled themselves in the best positions for seeing and being seen. The noise and confusion was so great that the groundlings lost patience and called loudly—and not too politely—for quiet. They were answered with cries from the stage, and for a few moments the theatre was full of a wild uproar. But the real anxiety of every one present to see the play conquered, and altercation ceased. Then the Prologue spoke his introduction to the play, bidding the audience see in the bare stage a street of Rome in the days of the great Cæsar, and asking their attention and their favour while the story of Cæsar's life and death was set forward.

There was no attempt to reproduce the conditions of the time represented. All the actors wore Elizabethan dress of the richest description; there was no scenery, and there were no properties except such as were absolutely necessary to the action. Clocks struck, though in Cæsar's day clocks were unknown; the lion roared in the Capitol, though there was no lion in the Capitol at Rome; but in the minds of Shakespeare's audience, as in the mind of Shakespeare himself, Rome stood, partly if not wholly, for the Englishman's great City of London—and there were lions in the Tower. Calpurnia and Portia were played by young, smooth-faced boys, for no woman appeared upon the public stage until long after the reign of Elizabeth was ended.

The scenes of each act were played straight through without intervals. Between the acts there was music, or perhaps a clown who jested and played the buffoon regardless of the tragic nature of the play.

The audience, like most of the audiences of Shakespeare's day, was an extremely critical and outspoken one. There were no professional critics in those days and no newspapers to influence public opinion. A playwright must manage to keep the interest of an audience that was not scholarly nor cultured; that was not interested in abstract problems, but was intensely interested in life; that cared little for historical accuracy and strict dramatic propriety, but cared a great deal for strong situations, moving scenes, and real, live characters; whose faculties were active and eager and whose high spirits often became boisterous. If he could not interest this audience nothing could save his play from failure. From its verdict there was no appeal; and each member claimed a voice in giving this verdict. "Your carman and tinker claim as strong a voice in their suffrage, and sit to give judgment on the play's life and death," says Dekker, "as well as the proudest Momus among the tribe of Critic."

Of *Julius Cæsar* the reception was, on the whole, favourable. Many outspoken criticisms came from all parts of the house. Actors were freely enlightened as to their defects in appearance, speech, and manner, and were adjured to

amend these as speedily as might be. The lordlings on the stage interrupted at their pleasure, and the occupants of the pit endeavoured to shout them down, though they themselves claimed the fullest privilege of interruption in their turn. But this was only at the beginning of an act, or in comparatively unimportant parts of the play. When the action was in full swing the audience gave their undivided attention.

The play ended, and there were great shouts of applause from the audience, who in noisy but unmistakable fashion gave their verdict in its favour. Then all the actors came forward to the front of the stage, knelt down, and offered up a prayer for the Queen, the nobility, clergy, and commons. The curtain was drawn, and the performance was over.

Master Simon Nocker stood up in his place and looked round the theatre once more. The groundlings were trooping noisily out. He saw his two young friends in the middle of an uproarious group, discussing earnestly and vociferously the merits of the play they had just witnessed. They would probably spend the next hour or two dicing in a tavern or roystering in the streets. Master Nocker had no wish for their company, so he wrapped his cloak around him and passed quickly out of the theatre. It was by this time nearly five o'clock, and evening was coming on. Every one was anxious to get home before dark, for the ill-lighted streets were neither pleasant nor safe for wayfarers. Master Nocker set out briskly to make his way through the noisy, eager crowd that lingered round the doorway, but he kept his keen and kindly eyes open to the humours of the scene around him. Here was a group of tattered, unwashed fellows ("Poets, belike," thought our draper) singing in excellent time and tune Thomas Lodge's dainty madrigal, *Phœbe sat, Sweet she sat.* There was a gallant who had slipped in mounting his horse, and had risen with his rich silks and velvets blackened by the mire of the road, to the hearty amusement of the bystanders. In front was a youth who was making desperate efforts to pass quickly through the press, eluding by his nimble movements all the attempts made by half a dozen of his companions to stop him, and

disregarding the cry of "Cutpurse!" which they laughingly raised. Surely Master Nocker knew that lithe, fleeing figure! It could not be—and yet it was—his own pattern apprentice, William Green, whom he had left hard at work clearing out the shelves of the smaller storeroom when he had looked in just before his own departure. The light of a lantern fell upon the lad's face; it was the trusted William. Master Nocker had a mind to be angry. William should suffer for this. But try as he would the frown refused to come to his face; instead he found himself smiling at the adroitness with which the lad was baffling his pursuers. "After all," thought Simon Nocker, his heart warmed by his three hours of enjoyment, "it is not every day that there is a chance of seeing a new play by noble Master Shakespeare. I doubt not had there been such when I was an apprentice I too should have stole away. Methinks 'twill save trouble if I loiter awhile by the riverside that the lad may get home and nought be said."

CHAPTER XIX

WOMEN READERS

WHEN we look back to the England of our Saxon forefathers we see, moving among the warriors and yeomen who chiefly fill the picture, the shadowy figures of their womenkind. Few of them stand forward and show themselves clearly, but we can discern queens and great ladies and abbesses with their attendant trains of fair maidens or black-robed nuns ; with here and there humbler figures, such as that of the poor widow who sheltered St Cuthbert, or the neatherd's wife who has gained a place in history through her sharp scolding of a king.

None of these women was, or could be, a reader in the sense in which we to-day understand the word. They must be content to get their stories, as their fathers and sons and brothers got theirs, from the lays of the minstrels or the lessons of the Church. But some of them had learned the art of reading, and doubtless used such books as they had. Osburga, mother of Alfred, possessed a book of poems, though it is doubtful whether she could read it. Edith, wife of the Confessor, had, we are told, " read and mused and pondered in her youth over worldly lore "—which means the classical literature of Rome—but in her womanhood she read only the Scriptures and works of religion. Lady Godiva, mother of Hereward, who was as devout as any nun, read every day the Psalter through, as well as other portions of Scripture. The Abbess Hilda of Whitby, so Bede tells us, obliged those who were under her direction to attend much to the reading of the Holy Scriptures, which, in the case of the nuns, probably meant little more than spelling out familiar phrases in the service-book and Psalter.

The Conquest came, and a new company of women, seen more clearly now, and their ways better known. Most of the queens could read, and we hear of various books which

they possessed. Queen Margaret, wife of Edward I, employed a chronicler called John o' London, a fragment of whose manuscript still exists, " written in Latin on vellum, very finely and legibly penned, and ornamented with initial letters, illuminated with gold and colours." The abbesses and nuns were more polished and elegant than those of Saxon times, and there was perhaps a slightly higher standard of education among them, but the service-book and the Psalter seem still to have formed their main reading. There were some who read the lives of the saints and books of devotion, and a few were familiar with such Latin classics as were at that time available.

Gradually education spread among girls as well as among boys. By the thirteenth century all girls of good birth were taught to read, either at home by their brothers' tutors or at a convent school. There were also in most towns schools where boys and girls were taught side by side. Froissart tells us how, when he was a small boy, he went to such a school, and how he made boyish love to the little girls who were taught with him, giving them presents of pins and glass rings and apples and pears and thinking much more of winning their favour than of learning his lessons. He tells us also how, when he had grown to be a youth, he came one day upon a maiden whom he knew reading a romance, aloud, as the practice then was.

> I moved to greet her and named her by name, and said, " Fair, sweet lady, how call you this romance ? " She, forthwith closing her mouth, laid her hand upon the book, and made courteous answer, saying, " Cleone is his name ; well is the book made and well doth it treat of love ; you shall hear it, and tell me how it pleaseth you." Then spake I, " Lady, I am at one with that which I hear you read, for I love these things better than melody of harp or any other music." Then the damsel read on in a place that provoked to mirth, no word of mine can tell how sweetly her lips moved, they scarce seemed to touch the words, so low, so soft she laughed.

Doubtless all the young maidens of that time loved to read these entrancing love-stories, but not all were allowed to do so. Some careful parents forbade romances. The knight of the castle of La Tour Landry, in Anjou, disapproved

strongly of these "feigned stories and fables." His wife had died and had left him with three daughters to bring up, and he set himself to consider very seriously the question of their education. Parents, he thought, should

> put young children unto the scole, and make them bokys of wisdom and of science and books of vertu and profitable ensaumples whereby they may see the savement of the soule and of the body by the ensaumples of good living of the holy faderes before us, and not for to studie in the bokes that speke of love fables and of other worldly vanities.

And because he could not find such works for his daughters' reading he

> purposed to make a littell boke in the which I would write the good condiciouns and deedes of ladies and gentill women that for their goodness were worshipped, honoured, praised and renowned the time past and ever shal be.

He purposed also to include stories of "the maner contrarie of goodness, the which is called the boke of hurting of evill women that have used to do evill and have blames." And so, he says,

> I chose eleven priests and eleven clerks that I had and I made them extraie me ensaumples from the Bible and other bokes that I had as the gestis of kingges, the cronicles of France, of Grece, of Inglond, and of many other straunge laundes. And I made them rede me everie boke; and ther that I fonde a good ensaumple I made extraie it out; and thanne I made this boke. But I wolde not set it in rhyme, but in prose, for to abregge it, and that it might be beter and more plainly to be understood.

The book that the knight made is not one such as we should choose for a girl's reading to-day. The "boke of hurting of evill women" especially is full of horrible and revolting stories which would bring little pleasure to anyone, and little profit either. But in the late fourteenth and the fifteenth century it was praised by everybody, and not only the good knight's own daughters, but all well-brought-up girls were expected to read it.

The girls of the family of Paston in their Norfolk home probably knew the book, though we do not find it mentioned in their letters, nor is it included in the list of books belonging

to Sir John. They certainly read romances, for Sir John had a number of these, and Anne Paston had at least one—*The Story of Thebes*—of her own. There was another book which was very popular at the time, and which we feel sure they read—*How the Good Wife taught her Daughter*. This was written more than fifty years later than the knight's book, and was even more generally read by girls and women. Dame Agnes Paston would certainly see to it that both her daughters and her granddaughters knew this work thoroughly. It is so exactly in accordance with her own ideas that she might quite well have written it herself.

> And if thi children been rebel and wol not them low,[1]
> If ony of hem mysdooth, nouther banne hem ne blowe,[2]
> But tak a smert rodde and bete hem on a rowe
> Til thei crie mercy : and be of her gilt aknowe.

Thus the "Good Wife"; and Dame Agnes, in hearty agreement, beat her grown-up daughter Elizabeth several times in a week, and once even broke her head, so that the poor girl besought her brother to find her a husband that she might be delivered from her mother's "smert rodde."

This same poem tells us incidentally a good deal about the manners of the women of the fifteenth century :

> And when thou goist in the way, go thou not to faste,
> Braundische not with thin head, thy schuldres thou ne cast,[3]
> Have thou not to manye wordes ; to swear be thou not liefe,
> For alle such maners comen to an evil preefe.

Of the wives and daughters of the merchants and artificers of this period we hear little. We know that the citizen class was growing richer, and several contemporary writers speak severely of the London housewives, who, they say, think of nothing but amusement, and love to sit at the doors of their houses to show off their fine clothes. Chaucer's Wife of Bath, with her "fine coverchiefs" and "scarlet reed hosen," was one of these pleasure-loving dames. We can scarcely imagine her a reader, though it is clear that she knew some of the stories of the old Latin writers—Ovid and Valerius Maximus—which Jenkyn, her fifth husband,

[1] submit. [2] neither curse them nor scold. [3] wriggle.

had read to her from the " book of wicked wives " in which he delighted, but which she hated.

Throughout the fifteenth century education was becoming more general, for girls as well as for boys, and women were able to read the romances and the poems which busy scribes all over the country were turning out to suit the taste of the times. Many of them too read the forbidden translations of the Bible which were secretly circulated, and some of them suffered as heretics for being in possession of these books. They wrote letters too, vigorously expressed, and with the pleasingly phonetic spelling of their time. " Prey Grenfell," wrote Dame Agnes Paston, in 1451, " to send me word by wrytyn who Clement Paston hath do his dever in lernyng. And if he hath nought do well, nor wyll nought amend, prey hym that he wyll trewly belassch hym tyl he wyll amend."

This brings us to the days of the Tudors, and the era of the learned ladies. " The scene of human beings is changed," wrote Erasmus in 1500, " the monks, famed in past times for learning, are become ignorant, and *women love books.*" Erasmus, although he was a foreigner, and came to England for the first time in 1495, had ample means of forming an opinion of the Englishwomen of the day. He was a friend of Sir Thomas More, and paid him long visits at the pleasant Chelsea house by the river where the great lawyer lived with his wife and his large family, which was made still larger by the various relations and dependants to whom he extended its happy shelter. Erasmus was the adored friend of the elder daughters of the house—Meg and Daisy and Bess. He was made free of their " Academia "—the delightful room, looking out upon the " cleare shining Thames," where they were preparing to take their places among the learned ladies of the day. He heard all about the work they were doing with their tutor; looked at the books which lay open on each of the three desks—St Augustine on Meg's, Sallust on Daisy's, Livy on Bess's. He was shown the filbert-tree which was such an excellent place for learning by heart passages from Homer; and he laughed at the tale of how, when the butter would not come at churning-time,

the maids called upon the daughters of the house to chant the hundred and nineteenth Psalm in Latin as a spell. When he was away they wrote to him of their studies, and he replied urging them to apply themselves to Greek, since in Greek rather than in Latin were the deep wellsprings of wisdom.

There were learned ladies also among the families of the great merchants. One such was Elizabeth Whitpoll, the young wife of a merchant-prince of London. She died on October 20, 1509, when she was twenty-seven years old, and was buried at the parish church of St Michael in Crooked Lane. According to her epitaph,

> Latin and Spanish and also Italian
> She spake, writ, and read, with perfect utterance,
> And for the English she the garland won
> In Dame Prudence Schoole, by graces purveyance,
> Which clothed her with vertues from naked Ignorance.
> Reading the Scriptures, to judge light from darke,
> Directing her faith to Christ, the only marke.

As the years of the sixteenth century went on the fervour for learning increased. Roger Ascham tells how he found Lady Jane Grey sitting in her chamber "reading Phaedon Platonis in Greek, and that with as much delight as some gentlemen would read a merry tale in Bocase." [1] The rest of the household were hunting in the park, and, says Ascham,

> after salutation and duty done I asked her why she would lose such pastime in the Park. Smiling she answered me: "I wis all their sport in the park is but a shadow to that pleasure that I find in Plato, alas! good folk, they never felt what true pleasure meant.

It sounds somewhat priggish and unnatural, coming from a girl of fifteen, but doubtless it was sincere. We find other girls of the time speaking in much the same way. Mary of Scotland read Latin authors with George Buchanan. Mary of England had Linacre for her Latin tutor when she was only five years old.

But the crown and glory of all the learned Tudor ladies

[1] Boccaccio.

was Elizabeth, who was taught by Roger Ascham. Said Mulcaster, headmaster of the Merchant Taylors' School :

> If no storie did tell it, if no State did allow it, if no example did confirm it, that young maydens deserve trayning, this our own myrrour, the majestie of her sex, doth prove it in her own person and commends it to our reason. . . . We have besides her Highness, as undershining starres, many singular ladies and gentlewymen so skilful in all cunning of the most laudable and loveworthy qualities of learning as they may well be alledged as presidents to praise.

Such " undershining starres " were Lady Jane Seymour, who at ten years old had, with her two elder sisters, written four hundred Latin distichs upon the death of the Queen of Navarre, and Mary Sidney, sister and loved companion of the " mirror of knighthood," Sir Philip Sidney. She studied Latin, Greek, and Hebrew with her brother, and read with him the best works of her own time. Unfortunate Lady Mary Grey, whose fate was only less miserable than that of her sister Jane, was a great reader of pious books. She possessed, we are told, a Bible, a Book of Common Prayer, *Mr Knox's Answer to the Adversary of God's Predestination, Mr Knewstubbe's Readings, The Ship of Assured Safety, Mr Cartwright's First and Second Reply, The Hunter of the Romish Fox, Godly Mr Whitgift's Answer, The Duty of Perseverance, The Edict of Pacification, Sermons of the Four Evangelists*, besides French and Latin dictionaries.

There were, besides, the pious Elizabethan ladies whose chief reading was the Bible and books of devotion. There was Lady Hoby, who lived quietly on her Yorkshire estate, busy with her housewifely duties, yet spending much time every day in reading the Bible, the sermons of learned divines, and Foxe's *Book of Martyrs*. There was Mrs Wallington, wife of the turner of Eastcheap, whom her son so lovingly and beautifully describes.

> She was very loving and obedient to her parents, loving and kind to her husband, very tender-hearted to her children, much affecting the sincere preachers of God's word, loving all that were godly, much misliking the wicked and profane. She was a pattern of sobriety unto many ; very seldom was seen abroad, except at church ; when others recreated themselves on holidays

plant are of a pleasant purple colour, and the others white, which setteth foorth the difference: of which kinde we haue some that beare double flowers, which are of diuers colours, greatly esteemed for the beautie of their flowers, and pleasant sweete smell.

3 *Leucoium violaceum.*
Violet colour stocke Gilloflower.

4 *Leucoium syluestre.*
Wilde stocke Gilloflower.

✲ *The description.*

3 This kinde of stocke Gilloflower that beareth flowers of the colour of a violet, that is to saie, of a blewe tending to a purple colour, which setteth foorth the difference betwixt this plant and the other stocke Gilloflowers; in euerie other respect is like the precedent.

4 The wilde stocke Gilloflower hath a thicke and woodde roote, with some threddie strings fastened thereto: from which riseth vp a stiffe and brittle stalke, garnished from the bottome to the tuft of flowers with long, fat and thicke hoarie leaues. The flowers growe at the top of the stalkes, of a redish colour. The seede is like the garden stocke Gilloflower, but lesser.

✲ *The place.*

These kindes of stocke Gilloflowers do grow in most gardens throughout England.
The wilde stocke Gilloflower doth growe vpon rockie and stonie mountaines.

✲ *The time.*

They flower in the beginning of the spring, and continue flowring all the summer long.

✲ *The names.*

The Stocke Gilloflower is called in Greeke ἀκτίον: in Latine *Viola alba*: in Italian *Viola bianca*: in Spanish *Violetas blanquas*: in English Stocke Gilloflowe, Gamsey Violet, and Castle Gilloflower.

✲ *The temperature and vertues.*

They are referred vnto the Wall flower, although in vertue much inferior, yet are they not vsed in phisicke, except amongst certaine Empericks and Quacksaluers, about loue and lust matters, which for modestie I omit. A

Title-page and Page from Gerard's "Herbal" (1597) 170

and other times she would take her needlework and say, "Here is my recreation." She was of fine inventions for drawing works, and other choice works, and many fine and neat pieces of work hath she soon dispatched, she would so apply to it; besides a very good judgment in setting out works in colours either for birds or flowers. God had given her a pregnant wit and an excellent memory. She was very ripe and perfect in all stories of the Bible, likewise in all stories of the Martyrs and could readily turn to them. She was also perfect and well seen in the English Chronicles and in the Descents of the Kings of England.

Finally, we must look at one class of books in which all these ladies, gentle or simple, devout or worldly, were more or less interested, from the time when women first began to read at all. It consists of books of domestic interest, such as cookery books and herbals. Cooking was a serious matter in those early times. Dishes were far more elaborate than they commonly are to-day, and a far greater quantity of spices and other flavourings was used. In winter especially, when the foundation of the dinner must be tasteless salted meat and dried vegetables, it was incumbent on the housewife to see that it was dressed in the most palatable manner. Consequently ladies sought eagerly for new recipes, and many cookery books were issued. Here is an extract from one that dates from the fifteenth century. To make *tartes de chare*, or, as we should say, meat pies,

> Take Freyssche Porke and hew it and grynd it on a mortere; and take it uppe on-to a fayre vesselle; and take the whyte an the yolkys of Eyroun [1] and strayne into a vesselle throw a straynour and temper the Pork therwith. Than take Pynez [2] Roysonys of Courance,[3] and frye hem in freyssche grece and cast therto pouder Peper and Gynger, Canelle,[4] Sugre, Safroun and salt, and cast thereto and do it on a cofynne [5] and plant thine cofynne above with Pynes and kyt Datys and gret Rosonys and smal byrdys or ellys hard yolkys of Eyroun; and if thou take byrdys frye hem on a little grece or thow put hem on thin cofynne and endore [6] with yolkys of Eyroun and lat bake til it be ynow and serve forth.

These recipes the ladies copied in manuscript books which were carefully preserved in the family and passed from mother to daughter through many generations.

[1] eggs. [2] pepper. [3] currants.
[4] cinnamon. [5] crust of a pie. [6] glaze.

The herbals, though they taught incidentally much about gardening, were mainly concerned with the manufacture of perfumes, toilet washes, liniments, and medicines. Every great lady doctored her household, and many were very well skilled in dealing with ordinary ailments and such injuries as strains, bruises, and cuts. The herb-garden furnished the materials, which were distilled and bottled by the busy housewife and her maidens in the still-room.

The reign of Queen Elizabeth was the period when women attained to a greater degree of respect and consideration than they had ever enjoyed before. When the Maiden Queen died things began to change. The era of brilliant women was, at least for a time, ended.

CHAPTER XX

THE PURITANS

PURITANISM came like a thin, slow trickle of black in the sparkling, eddying stream of Elizabethan life. Soberly dressed, grave-faced men began to appear here and there in most of the places where the Elizabethans congregated. In the streets and the shops, on the quays and aboard the ships, they were to be picked out by twos and threes ; in the churches they gathered strongly until, later, they set up meeting-houses for themselves ; but they were never seen in the taverns and the theatres. They had their own haunts where they met to argue and discuss, and to denounce those who did not agree with them, and they were always and in every place ready to testify to the faith by which they lived.

If we go back to that morning in 1596 when we watched our general reader take his pleasant saunter round St Paul's Churchyard we shall remember that we saw a few of these sober gentlemen making their quiet, purposeful way through the gay crowd. They took little notice of the book-stalls as they passed, or of the pert apprentices who thrust the latest translation of some Italian *novella* or the popular jest-book of the moment under their nose, crying with mock servility, " Buy a book, I pray you, buy a new book." They went straight on until they came to the particular shop that they wanted—probably that of John Day, or of Christopher Barker, or of William Seres. They looked eagerly round the stall, disregarding the poems and plays, the books of jests and riddles and songs, the broadsides and chapbooks, with which it was piled ; and when at length their eyes fell on some small quarto volumes, dumpy and uninteresting-looking, it was clear that they had found what they had come to seek.

These were the theological works of the day, in which

questions of religion were argued always with heat, and generally with bitterness; often also with the coarseness of unseemly personalities. Episcopalian, Presbyterian, Calvinist, Puritan, Catholic, poured out argument and abuse in an apparently endless stream, each upholding his own views on the doctrine and discipline of the ideal church; and as fast as the books were produced they were bought by an eager public.

The little knot of Puritans who stood by the bookstall were jostled by gallant and country gentleman, merchant and player, all nearly as eager as they to read what the latest champion on one side or the other had to say. Everybody in the days of Elizabeth was violently interested in religious questions, but the interest of these others was divided. Soon a new play or a new song caught their eyes, and they turned to that with equal zest. The Puritans alone remained constant to the closely printed volumes that looked so dull and stodgy, and were really red-hot with passion.

To all Puritans the literature of religion was supreme, and to many it was the only literature worthy or fit for the reading of a godly man. Their passion for it was so strong that they were willing to run the risk of fine or imprisonment—for even in the great days of Elizabeth religious persecution had by no means died out—to satisfy it. Books and pamphlets attacking the practices of the Church and the lives of the bishops were printed at private presses and distributed by secret agents throughout the country; and the Puritans eagerly received them, let the law do its worst. The cleverest and boldest of all these publications were the Martin Marprelate tracts, the first of which had appeared in the year of the Armada. They had raised a storm which had gone on for five years. Tract after tract had appeared, and the enraged bishops, with all their efforts, had not been able to discover the writers or stop the issue.

But it was not for works of this kind that the Puritan came to St Paul's Churchyard. These forbidden publications appeared mysteriously at his own house, and were put away securely in secret places. He came to the bookstall for works such as all the world might read. On this particular

morning he was probably looking out for the new tract *Pleasant Quippes for Upstart Newfangled Gentlewomen*, by the famous Stephen Gosson, author of *The Schoole of Abuse*, or George Gifford's *Dialogues of Witches and Witchcraft*, or—that he might know and denounce the views of his adversaries—the fifth book of Bishop Hooker's *Ecclesiastical Polity*, which had lately been published.

Possibly among these Puritan gentlemen was one John Milton, a prosperous scrivener of Bread Street, Cheapside, well known and much respected. He was a tall, scholarly-looking man with a grave, handsome face, and his dress, though it was sober and plain, had not the formal cut and stiff precision that marked the attire of many of his brothers in doctrine. Neither was his taste in literature as limited as theirs. He bought, besides the *Ecclesiastical Polity*, a new song-book containing poems by his friend Henry Lawes and by Robert Byrd, both famous musicians; also the new edition of Daniel's sonnets. He was a man of wide culture, and, in spite of his Puritanism, a musician and a writer of songs. He was a fine but rare type of Puritan—one who loved learning and did not look upon beauty and gaiety as devices of the devil.

Puritanism had not, at this time, any political significance. The Puritan, though he found many faults with the Church that Elizabeth had established, was intensely loyal to Elizabeth herself. To him, as to the rest of her subjects, she was the Great Queen, the upholder of Protestantism, who stood between her people and the Church of Rome. While she lived, though he argued and protested, and found a fierce joy in reading denunciations of the bishops and the Established Church, he did not attempt to separate himself from it or to take any violent action. But when James I came to the throne loyalty weakened, and the Puritans began to formulate their own political as well as their own religious principles. Their numbers increased rapidly, and their doctrines gained a strong hold upon the lower classes—artisans and yeomen and shopkeepers. These could most of them read at least well enough to spell out a chapter in the Bible. They went frequently to meetings where enthusiasts of their

order expounded to them the Scriptures; and thus, by constant hearing and reading, the Word of God became their intimate and familiar possession.

In 1611 the Authorized Version of the Bible was given to the nation, and this circulated far more freely than either the Great Bible or the Bible of Geneva. Most of the Puritans, however, kept to the Genevan version, both as being more familiar and because it contained marginal notes by Calvin.

We will pay another visit to St Paul's Churchyard in the summer of 1634, when the Stuarts have been for thirty years on the English throne. The stalls and bookshops look much the same as they looked in 1596, and the company too looks much the same, except for the number of Puritans. Instead of a few sober figures easily picked out from a gaily dressed throng there is a broad, dark stream, steadily, even aggressively, holding its own. They are, too, more obtrusively singular in their dress and in their manner, with sad, severe raiment, dour faces, and brows frowning darkly at any sign of frivolity or merriment in those around them. There is Barebones, the leather-seller of Fetter Lane, Greene the felt-maker, Spencer the horse-rubber, and Quartermaine the brewer's clerk—all of them to be alluded to scornfully a few years later, in a tract called *New Preachers*, as "mighty sticklers in this new talking trade which many ignorant coxcombs call preaching."

For most of the Puritans the greatest attraction is the *Histriomastix* of William Prynne, in which at enormous length, and with quotations from innumerable authorities, the writer sets himself to prove that "popular stage plays are sinful, heathenish, lewd, ungodly spectacles, and most pernicious corruptions; condemned in all ages as intolerable Mischiefes to Churches, to Republics, to the manners, mindes, and soules of men." If they cannot afford to buy the book they stand for as long as the bookseller will allow, turning over its eleven hundred pages, and gloating over passages in which the denunciations are expressed with special vigour. Then they walk away, discussing loudly and harshly the vengeance that they hope will be meted out to the wicked rulers who have imprisoned Master Prynne, placed him in the pillory,

and cut off both his ears—all because a passage in his book has been taken as a reflection upon that woman of sin, Queen Henrietta Maria.

Another group has gathered round a stall where is spread out a goodly show of tracts, some written by the Puritans, some by those who oppose them. One man takes up a copy of *The Lawless, Kneeless, Schismatical Puritan,* by Giles Widdowes, reads a page, then, scowling darkly, puts it down. Another is reading *The Dippers Dipt; or the Anabaptists Duck'd and Plung'd over Head and Ears at a Disputation in Southwark,* by Daniel Featley, and before he has read far he brings out his purse, pays for the book, and carries it away, a look of satisfaction on his face. There is a great sale for the sermons and works of Thomas Adams of Wingrave and Richard Sibbes of the church at Gray's Inn, both of them popular Puritan preachers. George Herbert's *Temple* too is finding many buyers, for it is becoming a famous work, which it behoves the Puritans to know, that they may confute it.

Among the throng is a young man at whom the Puritans glance doubtfully, not certain to which camp he belongs. His dress is that of the ordinary gentleman of the time, but plainer and darker than most, and although he seems to be only in the early twenties he has a grave and lofty bearing which gives him the dignity of an older man. He wears his brown hair long, and he has a calm, beautiful face, and a complexion so delicately fair that at Christ's College, Cambridge, which he has lately left, he was known as " the lady of Christ's." This is John Milton, son of that other John Milton whom we saw in the Churchyard in 1596. The scrivener has retired from business, and has bought a house at Horton, in Buckinghamshire, where his son is now living quietly with him. From time to time John Milton the younger pays a visit to London to buy books and learn, as he has told us, " anything new in Mathematics or in Music, in which sciences I then delighted." For him the controversial pamphlets on the bookstall have only a secondary interest. He has come to buy the works of Euripides, and soon he sees what he wants and secures it, paying twelve shillings and sixpence for the two volumes ; then he lingers

by the stall, turning over editions of Greek and Latin classics with the careful, lingering touch of a book-lover and a scholar.

So absorbed is he that he does not notice another youth, younger than himself, but of the same type of cultured and liberal Puritanism, who stands almost opposite him. This boy also has long, soft, curling brown hair, a handsome face, and the look and bearing of a gentleman. He too disregards the literature of theological squabbles and takes a scholar's interest in the classics ; and when he turns away from these it is to pass to another bookstall which has a tempting pile of music-books. This is John Hutchinson, law student of Lincoln's Inn, later to become noted as one of the twelve regicides who signed the death-warrant of Charles I.

Very unlike these two is another youth, who has a copy of Bacon's *Novum Organum* in his hand and is reading quickly and hungrily in fear each moment of hearing the bookseller's voice asking what he pleases to buy. It comes all too soon, and with a sigh he lays down the volume and passes on. It is evident that he is country bred, probably the son of a small farmer. He looks lonely and unhappy, and so he is, for he has come up from his home near Shrewsbury to a post in the household of Sir Henry Herbert, Charles' Master of the Revels, from whom he hopes for help in his studies. But he has had a Puritan upbringing, and the ways of the Court, though it is far more sober and decorous than it was under James I or even under Elizabeth, shock and distress him. There are stage-plays instead of sermons on the Lord's Day, and little preaching at any time ; and when he does hear a sermon it is nearly always full of abuse and ridicule of the Puritans. He is anxious to go home, but can find no excuse for leaving the place to which his father, Richard Baxter, sent him with high hopes ; so he has come to wander in St Paul's Churchyard because he loves books and feels less lonely in their company.

Presently as he saunters on his eye is caught by the title of a pamphlet on one of the stalls—*The Saint's Cordial,* by Dr Richard Sibbes. He knows Sibbes' famous tract, *A Bruised Reed.* His father bought it for him three years before from a pedlar who came to the door with ballads and

some few good books, and he and his son Richard read it with much edification. So now Richard buys *The Saint's Cordial*, which costs only a few pence; then looks on with interest while a London citizen, the very type of a stern and rigid well-to-do Puritan, makes a selection from the stock of tracts on the stall. This is Nehemiah Wallington, the son of that good woman whom we saw, in the later days of Elizabeth, ordering her household in pious and godly fashion at her husband's house in Eastcheap. Nehemiah carries on his father's business as a turner, but the passion of his leisure hours is the collection and reading of the religious pamphlets and weekly books issued by the Puritans. He has a great store of these in his little room behind the shop. He keeps a diary which is mainly a record and description of these tracts, some of them such as it is dangerous at this time for any man to possess. But Nehemiah Wallington is too steadfast in the faith—though he still belongs to the Established Church—to shrink from danger. Later, in 1639, he was brought before the Star Chamber. "I had some books," he wrote to a friend,

> that were not to the lordly Prelates' liking, and an honest man being in some trouble about them did betray me and my brother, with divers others (in hope to free himself) that we were had up into the Star Chamber Court which is a very chargeable Court and it cost me a great deal of money and loss of time, with much grief and sorrow, and could not be freed out of that Court, but yet God hath turned it that all hath worked for the best.

Such was the literature loved by the Puritans in the days of Charles I. Yet though they felt a fanatical joy in its laudation of the elect and a stern satisfaction in its rough handling of their enemies, it formed after all only a small and unimportant part of their reading. For all true and earnest Puritans there was one great book and one only, and that book was the Bible. They read it so diligently that it became part of their very nature. They guided, or professed to guide, every action of their lives entirely by its precepts; they imitated its phraseology and borrowed its similes; they named their children after the Hebrew patriarchs and prophets; and when they wanted to bestow

a title of distinction they did it in some such form as Praise-God Barebones.

Of Oliver Cromwell it has been said that "For him a single volume comprehended all literature and that volume was the Bible." The saying is true also of many of his brothers in the faith. Bunyan declared that after his conversion he was "never out of the Bible either by reading or meditation." It was on the Bible that Cromwell relied when he set himself to train up a body of men whose religious fervour should make them a match for the spirited, high-born Cavaliers, and his confidence was justified. It was the New Model Army of godly enthusiasts that won the victory for the Parliamentarians. It was men of the New Model Army, with the words of the Bible on their lips, who stood round that direful scaffold in Whitehall on January 30, 1649; and it was the New Model Army that ensured the rule of the Saints, with the Bible as their professed guide, for eleven stern and sombre years.

CHAPTER XXI

FOR CHURCH AND KING

THERE were among the Puritans many, doubtless, who held themselves loyal subjects of King Charles. But when the testing time came, and a man must declare himself on one side or the other, those who had given up allegiance to the Church found it possible, if not easy, to renounce the King, whereas those who held to the Church must hold to the King, since the Church declared him to be divinely appointed and rebellion against him to be sin of the most deadly kind. It was therefore the party most strongly opposed to Puritanism that took for its watchword, "For Church and King." The party included a large—though not perhaps as large as is commonly believed—proportion of reckless, riding, fighting, roystering, gay, and splendid gallants, who came to be known as "Cavaliers." With these we have here little concern. It is not among them that we shall find our readers, but rather in the quiet country houses and secluded city dwellings, where the strife of parties has not yet broken up a well-ordered and gracious family life.

They must have been delightful people, these Anglican Royalists, whom we see pictured in the memoirs and histories of the time—the grave and gallant gentlemen, the pious, gentle, high-bred ladies, who loved the old things and the old ways. They were not distrustful of beauty and joy, as the Puritans were, they loved music and mirth, and even splendour and fine clothes, in their places. But they acknowledged so many duties and obligations that there was little room in their lives for self-indulgence, and some of the more devoutly minded practised an austerity in their personal habits which outran the austerity of the strictest among the Puritans. They were cultured and well educated, as education went in those days, when there had been a great

falling off, especially among the women, from the standard of the Elizabethans. But their chief interest was in religion, and their chief books were the same as those of the Puritans —the Bible and Foxe's *Book of Martyrs*. "Even from our infancy wee were instructed never to neglect to begin and end the day with prayer, and orderly every morning to read the Bible," says Anne Murray, daughter of the Mr Murray who had been tutor in the household of Charles I.

The Book of Martyrs was considered to be a most suitable book for reading aloud, and portions of it all the children learned by heart. Hooker's *Ecclesiastical Polity*, which set forth the principles and the constitution of the Anglican Church, was the text-book of their religion, and was studied diligently.

They read much poetry, especially the religious poetry of their own day, which was, indeed, peculiarly their own, breathing as it did the very spirit—quiet, happy, mystic—of the faith in which they lived. Its writers were Herbert, Crashaw, Vaughan, Traherne, and Quarles; all of them were faithful Churchmen, except Crashaw, who became a Catholic, and all of them fervent Royalists. A prose work of Traherne's, unpublished during his lifetime and for nearly two hundred and fifty years afterward, but handed about in manuscript among his friends, sets forth clearly and beautifully the ideal which these Anglicans strove to reach.

> Till you can sing and rejoice and delight in God as misers do in gold and kings in sceptres, you never enjoy the world. Till your spirit filleth the whole world and the stars are your jewels; till you are as familiar with the ways of God in all ages as with your walk and table: till you love men so as to desire their happiness with a thirst equal to the zeal of your own; till you delight in God for being good to all; you never enjoy the world. Till you more feel it than your private estate, and are more present in the hemisphere, considering the glories and the beauties there than in your own house; till you remember how lately you were made and how wonderful it was when you came into it; and more rejoice in the palace of your glory than if it had been made but to-day morning.

Doubtless few of the Royalists lived thus in the full beauty of holiness; but they accepted Traherne's picture

as their ideal, and some of them at least approached it very nearly. Two such were George Herbert, the younger son of a famous Welsh Border family, and Nicholas Ferrar, whose father was a great London merchant, "written esquire" by Queen Elizabeth. These two were born in the same year, were close friends at Cambridge, and spiritual comrades all their lives. Herbert when he left the university had great ambitions, and looked eagerly for advancement at Court. But his religion was stronger than his ambition, and after a few years he gave up all his splendid prospects and was ordained a deacon of the Anglican Church. In 1630 he became rector of Bemerton, in Wiltshire, and there he lived the busy, self-denying, happy life of a parish priest, such as he has pictured in *The Country Parson*—"a book," says Izaak Walton, "so full of plain, prudent, and useful rules that that country parson that can spare twelve pence, and yet wants it is scarce excusable." Few country parsons did "want" the book; in nearly all the quiet rectories throughout the countryside it had a place beside Foxe and Hooker. It guided and inspired their reading, as well as their active work in their parishes. "The chief top of his knowledge," it told them,

> consists in the book of books, the storehouse and magazine of life and comfort, the holy Scriptures. The Country Parson hath read the fathers also, and the schoolmen, and the late writers, or a good proportion of all; out of all which he hath compiled a book and body of divinity which is the storehouse of his sermons, and which he preacheth all his life, but diversely clothed and illustrated.

Nicholas Ferrar, when he had finished his course at Cambridge, went back to his London home. His father, Richard Ferrar, was a zealous Churchman, his mother was equally devout. She was a beautiful, well-born woman, who delighted to order her household in godly and pleasant ways and to bring up her children to fear God and honour the King. As she sat at work with her maids she would gather her children round her, and they would sing Psalms and hymns, or one would read aloud from the Bible or Foxe's *Book of Martyrs*. Nicholas was the youngest of her sons,

and from his childhood had loved books. To complete his education his father sent him, as the custom was, to travel in Italy and other parts of Europe; and on his travels he collected a great store of books, including "comedies, tragedies, love-hymns, heroical poems, novels, and the like," which he read with great delight. He became a member of Parliament and a busy man of affairs, but always his heart was set on spiritual things, and he longed to give himself entirely to God's service. After his father's death he confided his hopes and his wishes to his mother, and she was eager to help him. In the year that Charles I came to the throne she bought the lordship of Little Gidding, a depopulated parish where the whole of the land had been turned into pasture. There was a large, dilapidated manor-house and a small church that was used for storing hay. The house she caused to be put in repair, and then she, her son John with his wife and family, and her daughter and her daughter's husband and family came there to live, apart from the world, a peaceful, ordered life and give themselves entirely to the service of God. Nicholas Ferrar took deacon's orders, and served the community as chaplain. In his whole-hearted devotion to his new duties he packed his treasured collection of books into three great hampers and stored them away, doing this not because he believed such reading to be wrong, but because it took up time which he felt could be ill-spared in his busy life. Everybody was busy at Little Gidding. There were three services a day in the church which they had themselves repaired and cleaned, and the "hours" were recited in the big, cheerful community room which was living-room and working-room for all. The children had their lessons with tutors who formed part of the community; their elders worked at various handicrafts, of which book-binding was the chief; in this they gained such skill that they produced most exquisite examples, and the book-binding of Little Gidding became famous. They made "Harmonies" of the Gospels; they read and studied. They wrote the Little Gidding story books, a collection of "divine interludes, dialogues, and discourses in the Platonic way." They cared for the welfare of the servants and others

employed in the community ; and they spent much time in meditation and private prayer. At meals the younger members read aloud in turn from histories and chronicles and the inevitable *Book of Martyrs*.

There were many among the Royalists throughout the country who longed to make for themselves such a home as that at Little Gidding, and among these was Lettice, Lady Falkland. But her husband, though as devout as she, had wide interests and intellectual pursuits that could not be confined within the limits of a community. So Lady Falkland had to content herself with making daily life at her fine old manor-house at Great Tew almost as simple and as strict as that of a convent. She and her chaplain read the Bible and many religious books regularly to the members of the household, and instructed them in the doctrines of the Church. At the same time the house was a meeting-place for a brilliant company of poets, scholars, and wits. Lucius Cary, Lord Falkland, was a peculiarly attractive and interesting man. " His person was little and of no great strength, his hair blackish and somewhat flaggy, his eye black and quick " ; he had " courage so keen, nature so fearless, disposition so gentle and obliging, so much delighted in kindness, courtesy, and generosity that all mankind could not but admire and love him." In his early youth he had been one of the " sons of Ben "—the company of wits and poets that had gathered round the old poet Ben Jonson at the famous meetings in London taverns. He loved to be in the midst of what was best in the literary society of his day, and himself wrote verses which were praised by his friends. His house in London had been a famous meeting-place, and when he settled at his manor-house in the pretty village of Great Tew he still gathered a brilliant company about him. Great Tew was only seventeen miles from Oxford, and the most famous men of learning came from the university to join in the readings and discussions in which the young master of the house delighted ; and one of them declared that he had " got more useful learning by his conversation at Great Tew than he had at Oxford."

But if we wish to see an ordinary Royalist household,

made up of neither saints nor scholars, but of everyday men and women and boys and girls, we must go to the pleasant manor-house of East Claydon in Buckinghamshire. Here lived Sir Edmund Verney, with his wife, his four sons, Ralph, Edmund, Tom, and Henry, his six daughters, known as Cary, Sue, Pen, Peg, Molly, and Betty, and his son Ralph's charming young wife, Mary. They lived the ordinary life of country gentlefolk, Sir Edmund and Ralph looking after the estate, the other sons at school or university, the mother and her daughters busy with the many housewifely duties that fell to the women when most things required for household use were " home made." The boys and girls were healthy and high-spirited. They laughed and quarrelled and played practical jokes upon one another and upon the numerous relations who from time to time paid long visits at the hospitable manor-house. There was a delightful uncle, Dr Denton, who lived in London and was friend and adviser to the whole clan ; but the most delightful of them all was gay, sweet-tempered Mary Verney, whom the others called by the fond nicknames " Mischief " and " Landlady."

The Verneys were not a reading family, though the house seems, according to seventeenth-century standards, to have been fairly well supplied with books. There was " the booke of martyrs and other books in the withdrawing room," and we read of a copy of Quarles' *Emblems* that belonged to Molly. When Tom, the ne'er-do-well son, had got into a worse scrape than usual, and was obliged to stay at home for a time, he wrote to his father, begging for some means of recreation, " For to spend my time wholly in reading," he pleaded, " doth but exercise my mind, and not my body." When Edmund Verney, the soldier son, was abroad he wrote to his brother Ralph asking for the loan of some of his books. " You have many good latine historyes which I most preferred, and divers other excellent books in your studdy which I believe you seldom make use of." Ralph sent him *An Historicall Collection of the most Memorable Accidents and Tragicall Matterres of France, The History of Scanderbeg*, and Plutarch's *Lives* in French. Mary Verney liked the long

French romances of Mlle de Scudéry, which were beginning to be read in England, and Dr Denton teased her in his letters for this frivolous taste. She loved music and singing, and her lute-playing was famous in the family. Among the manuscripts preserved at East Claydon are several copies of Henry Lawes' song *To his Mistress going to Sea* :

> Farewell, fayre sainte, may not the seas and winde
> Swell like the Hearts and Eyes you leave beehinde,
> But calme and gentle, like the lookes you weare,
> Smile in your Face, and whisper in your Eare.

All the ladies of the Verney family could read, though their spelling was as delightfully phonetic as that of the Paston ladies two hundred years before. " I may justly make yous of the owlde fraise and say you tooke me up be foare I was downe," wrote Peg Verney to her brother Ralph in 1658.

If we leave the home of the country gentleman and visit that of the professional man and the prosperous citizen we find the same type of character and the same quiet, busy, cheerful life. At Norwich during the years that came before the Great Rebellion lived a young doctor named Thomas Browne, who was beginning to collect the " books, medals, plants, and natural things " which made his house in his later years " a paradise and cabinet of rarities." This young doctor was interested in all sorts of curious, out-of-the-way knowledge and antiquarian lore. He was an excellent classical scholar, and the works of all the great Greek and Latin writers were on his shelves. There too were medieval works on astrology and magic, Pliny's *Historia Naturalis* beloved of the Elizabethans, and poets, not English only, but French and Italian also. Dr Thomas Browne had a large circle of friends who, like himself, were interested in learning and in speculation on abstruse subjects. One of these friends was John Evelyn, the second son of Richard Evelyn of Wotton, in Surrey, himself a scholar, and afterward to become famous.

In Chancery Lane in London lived Izaak Walton, a prosperous ironmonger. He was not a scholar as Browne was a scholar, but he had a store of quaint and delightful learning. His shelves, we know, held the works of many

writers—Montaigne, Xenophon, St Jerome, Camden, Pliny, Josephus, Casaubon, Aristotle, Du Bartas, George Herbert, Wotton, Seneca, Bacon, Marlowe, Raleigh, Sir Thomas Overbury are among those that he mentions. His head was full of ballads and romances and country lore, and he could discourse on these things with a freshness and gentle gaiety that charmed even the gravest among his fellow-Royalists and made him the friend of those who were of much higher rank than his own. When, as often happened, he slipped away from his City shop and spent a few days wandering with rod and line along the pleasant streams of Hertfordshire there was always a book in his pocket. He listened with delight to the songs that the milkmaid or the housewife sang over her work, and at night when he went to his bedroom in some clean little country inn he searched among the broadsheets pasted on the wall for a ballad that was new to him. Often he went home the richer by one of these—*As at Noon Dulcina rested*, or *Phyllida flouts me*—which he would read with great enjoyment to his wife and daughters.

Down in Devonshire, at the little village of Dean Prior, lived Robert Herrick, the vicar of the parish. He was not at all like George Herbert and not at all like " the Country Parson." Herrick was an ardent Royalist, and, in his way, a devoted servant of the Anglican Church. He was neither saint nor ascetic ; he served his parish faithfully, but he was more careful to keep the feast days than the fasts, and he had no idea of putting the interests of his parishioners above his own. If they displeased him he wrote abusive poems about them, and it is said that he once threw a Bible at the head of a certain offender. He was tall and dark and burly, with a merry eye and a careless, jovial manner. His reading was not mainly the Fathers of the Church, though, like all his fellows, he knew his Bible well, and had read *The Book of Martyrs*. But he delighted most in classical plays and poems and the works of the Elizabethans—of Marlowe and Shakespeare and, above all, of Ben Jonson. He had been one of the " sons of Ben " in the early days of the century, when he had been serving his apprenticeship to his uncle,

Sir William Herrick, a jeweller of Cheapside ; and although he professed penitence for those early, unregenerate days their influence was always strongly felt in his life. He never conformed to the strict Anglican Royalist type, but was nearer to the reckless, pleasure-loving gallant, who sang his gay songs and read his witty books and did not let his sincere devotion to his Church and to his king make life too serious a matter or put any uncomfortable restraint upon his actions.

Such were some of the households to be found up and down the country in the early years of the reign of Charles I ; and there were many others like them. There were humbler households too, where the Bible and *The Book of Martyrs* were the only books ever read save the chapbooks which the pedlars carried round from door to door.

At the Court, though life was more luxurious and splendid than in the country houses, there was the same dignity and decorum and the same interest in intellectual pleasures. Charles himself was a great reader. He loved the poetry and romances of the Elizabethans, knew his Shakespeare well, and delighted in the brave and stately prose of Sir Philip Sidney's *Arcadia*. The most brilliant members of his Court were the poets, who formed a notable group. They were young men of rank and fortune who aspired to be at the very top of the mode. They had a reputation for dissolute living, but it seems probable that many of their escapades were wild youthful frolics, and not to be taken too seriously. They turned out verses almost as easily and freely as the Elizabethans had done, and took as little care what became of them. The manuscript was passed about among their friends, and was lost or published, as chance decided. But in one way or another the songs gradually became known to the wider circle of readers outside, and were sung as the songs of the Elizabethans had been sung in their day.

There were grave and learned divines at Court too, in whom the King took great pleasure. Sermons were still preached at Paul's Cross, but now that religious opinion was so bitterly divided and so many new sects were forming the

sermons did not make the general appeal that they had done in the time of the Tudors, and large congregations gathered only when some noted preacher, such as Archbishop Laud, was to be heard ; and then men went to criticize rather than to be taught.

The theatre also no longer drew the crowds that had thronged to it during the days of the Great Queen. The Puritans, now as ever, hated plays, and preached against them constantly as the works of the devil, and the more serious-minded among the Royalists found the plays most commonly represented little to their taste. Chapman and Massinger and Ford, with their tragedies of horror and unnatural crime, had taken the place of Shakespeare and Ben Jonson. The golden days of the drama were over long before the theatres were closed by the order of Parliament in 1642.

So the years went on until the intensifying political troubles touched the lives of the people at large. Quiet country households began to find their most interesting and exciting reading in the news-letters and news-books. The news-letters were accounts written by " intelligencers," who were employed and paid by country gentlemen—two or three generally joining together and handing on the letter from one to another—to collect and send the news from London at certain stated intervals. The news-letters were sent out by coach or messenger until 1637, when a weekly public post was established.

The news-book was a printed and licensed paper, first instituted in 1622. It contained foreign news only, and was issued once a week until the breaking out of the Civil War. Then the great demand for news caused it to become a record of home affairs and of the fortunes of the contending parties. Nehemiah Wallington, the turner of Eastcheap, collected a great store of newsbooks and made extracts of their most important items.

At the same time a great mass of controversial literature appeared, pamphlets and tracts on each side, one answering another. Most of them were violent and abusive, full of the strong passions that had been roused by the quarrel. Each

PLATE FROM THE "EIKON BASILIKE" (1649)

side, too, had its songs, though here the Roundheads made but a poor show compared to their opponents. Some of the Cavalier songs were really fine, rousing lyrics, breathing loyalty and true patriotism ; but many were scurrilous and full of personal abuse, and many were mere doggerel.

When war actually broke out the Royalist gentlemen showed that their watchword " For Church and King " was more than the expression of a lightly held devotion. Falkland left the beloved seclusion of Great Tew to join the King's forces, and fell, fighting bravely, at the battle of Newbury. Sir Edmund Verney held the office of the King's Standard-bearer, and he hastened to take up his post ; and at Edgehill, his right hand, still holding the standard, was severed from his arm, and he was killed. Young Ralph Verney, after long and painful thought, decided to throw in his lot with the Roundheads, but when, in 1640, the Long Parliament required all its officers to sign the Solemn League and Covenant he refused, and was forced to go into exile in France. At the same time and for the same reason Robert Herrick was driven from his vicarage and came to live in London, where he set about collecting and arranging for publication the poems he had written in Devonshire. George Herbert and Nicholas Ferrar had both died before these evil times came upon the nation, but the community of Little Gidding lasted on until, in 1646, both the house and the church were ransacked by the Parliamentary troops. John Evelyn quietly withdrew to France, waiting for better times.

In 1645 Mary Verney with her children joined Ralph in France, very sadly leaving their beautiful home to the mercies of the troops who from time to time were quartered there. The exiles were unhappy and anxious, with no duties to occupy them, and only occasional news from home. Ralph spent much of his leisure in reading. He wrote to Dr Denton, begging for books to be sent out to him. Most of those he asked for were on religious or political subjects —*The Levellers Vindicated* ; Prynne's *Historical Collection of Ancient Parliaments* ; *An Impeachment against Cromwell and Ireton,* by Lilburne ; Ascham ; Bishop Andrewes'

"2 Manuals"; Hooker, "his 6 and 8 books"; Clement Walker's *History of Independency*, and "2 Sclaters," which, he said, "treats or rather indeed mencioun Ant Xst, it is one of the best bokis I ever reade; he is strangely piquant and short and strangely convincinge." He asked also for "Laud's book against Fisher," and Chillingworth's works; and in July 1647 he wrote:

> Send me the *Moderate Intelligencer* weekly, or any of the King's letters or such small things, for wee have noe news at all here. I heare Mr May the poet hath now printed a book or two concerning my lord of Essex, and the cronicle of these times; certainly they must needes be worth reading, therefore desire the doctor to buy them for me, and pay him for them.

Good Dr Denton did his best to find something to suit Mary's taste too. He wrote that he heartily recommended Sclater for "Landlady's" reading. "Tell her it is now time to leave her Romantz to please me," he said, and later he lamented that he could not "gett a booke for 'Landladie's' pallett."

Then came the terrible thirtieth of January, 1649, and the execution of the King. The next day appeared the *Eikon Basilike: A Portrait of his Sacred Majesty in his Solitude and Sufferings*, which was given to the people as having been written by the King during his imprisonment, though later it was claimed as the work of John Gauden, a Royalist divine. To the Royalists it was a sacred book, raising their grief and their reverence for the King's memory to a passion. Even those who had been lukewarm in the King's cause were fired now by the noble pathos and beauty of his dying words. Every one rushed to buy the book; no Royalist could bear to be without it. Edition after edition was produced, and still the demand could not be satisfied. Dr Denton tried to get a copy for Mary and wrote on February 21, "If I am not disappointed you shall have the King's book. It hath been hitherto at 8*s*. and 10*s*. price."

Several attempts were made to answer the *Eikon Basilike*, but none of them, not even Milton's *Eikonoklastes* (which Ralph in his exile earnestly desired to read), could lessen the passion of love and horror that the book had aroused. Fifty

editions of it were sold within the year; it was read and quoted everywhere.

The stream of tracts and pamphlets that poured from the press grew greater than ever. Some were in verse, some in prose. Parliamentarian and Royalist reviled each other in terms so coarse and abusive that each rather lowered than upheld his own side. Milton, now a man nearly forty years old, entered into a violent controversy with a famous Dutch scholar who upheld the King's cause, and each wrote many pamphlets, most of them in Latin. For a time these party pamphlets, with the newspapers, were the chief reading of the people.

Gradually the country settled down under its new rulers, and each man took up as best he might the life from which the war had torn him. The Puritans were too busy reforming the State and Church, upholding their cause against their opponents, quarrelling with each other, and exercising all the rights and privileges that came with their new position of predominance, to have much time for reading. The Bible was still their chief, almost their only, book. They read it, quoted it, preached on it, took it as a literal guide in their private affairs and in matters of State. If some degraded it by far-fetched, one-sided applications of its precepts and ridiculous affectations of its style many used it nobly and reverently; and it is the Puritans' misfortune that these less worthy readers were, and still are, often taken as typical of the entire party.

The Royalists, on the other hand, separated from many of the duties that before had occupied them, having no part in the government, disappointed and almost heartbroken, turned to books for comfort and distraction. The devout sought spiritual help in books of religion. Richard Baxter's *Saints' Everlasting Rest* and Jeremy Taylor's *Holy Living* and *Holy Dying* appeared within a year or two of the King's death, and were eagerly bought by men and women all over the country. Lady Falkland, at Great Tew, now a sad house mourning for its master, read them both with devotion, while she ordered her own life and that of her household on ever stricter and more godly lines, until her death in 1651.

Sir Ralph Verney, who made his peace with Parliament and returned to England in 1651, thought very highly of Jeremy Taylor's book, and read it regularly. When in 1662 his son John went out to Smyrna Sir Ralph gave him *Holy Living* and *Holy Dying*, together with a Bible, Bishop Andrewes' *Devotions*, Gerard's *Meditations*, and *The Imitation of Christ.*

Charming Dorothy Osborne, daughter of Sir Peter Osborne, who had held Guernsey for the King, read Jeremy Taylor and quoted from his book in her letters to her lover, William Temple. "Dr Taylor (whose devote you must know I am)," she wrote, in 1654, "says that there is a great advantage to be gained in resigning up one's will to the command of another," and she went on to give the substance of the passage. But Dorothy loved other and lighter reading also. The long French tales which had been favourites with Mary Verney (poor Mary had died in exile in 1650) were becoming more and more common in English households where opinion was not too strict to admit of the reading of romances. It was not too strict at Chicksands, the Osbornes' delightful Bedfordshire home. Dorothy read the ten long volumes of *Le Grand Cyrus* with much pleasure, and sent them on afterward to William Temple that he might enjoy them too. She read and sent on also the first six volumes of *Cléopâtre*, a collection of stories in twenty-three volumes by Seigneur de la Calprenède, and two translations from the French, *Prazimene; or The Unlucky Fair One* and *Polexander*, "done into English by Wm. Browne, Gent." In October 1654 she wrote:

> *Parthenissa* is now my company. My brother sent it down, and I have almost read it. 'Tis handsome language: you would know it to be writ by a person of good quality though you were not told it; but in the whole I am not very much taken with it. All the stories have too near a resemblance with other romances, there is nothing of new or *surprenant* in them.

Dorothy read poetry too and books of travel. "Here are some verses of Cowley's," she wrote,

> tell me how you like them. 'Tis only a piece taken out of a new thing of his; the whole is very long, and is a description of, or rather a paraphrase upon, the friendship of David and Jonathan. 'Tis I think the best I have seen of his.

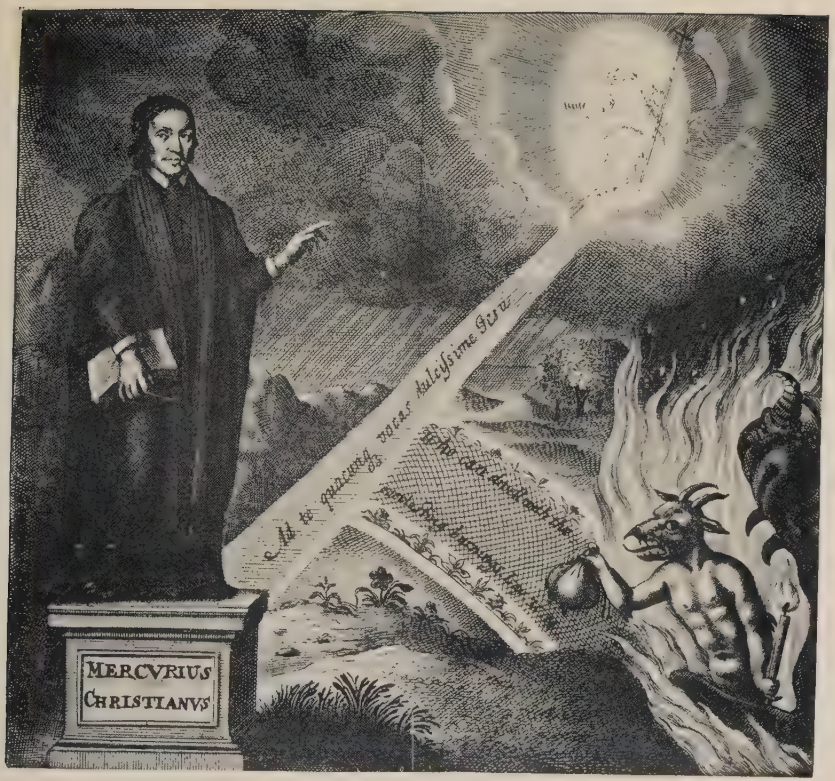


PLATE FROM JEREMY TAYLOR'S "THE RULE AND EXERCISE OF HOLY LIVING"

She was anxious to read the new poems, which every one else was reading. In 1653 she wrote:

> First let me ask you if you have seen a book of poems newly come out, made by my Lady Newcastle. For God's sake if you meet with it send it me. They say 'tis ten times more extravagant than her dress. Sure the poor woman is a little distracted, she could never be so ridiculous else to venture at writing books, and in verse too.

Books of travel and adventure Dorothy loved, and criticized shrewdly.

> Have you read the story of China, written by a Portuguese, Fernando Mendez Pinto, I think his name is ? If you have not, take it with you, 'tis as diverting a book of the kind as ever I read, and is as handsomely written. You must allow him the privilege of a traveller, and he does not abuse it. His lies are as pleasant, harmless ones as lies can be, and in no great number, considering the scope he has for them.

It is probable that Dorothy read many of her romances in the original French. English translations of most of them were published, but seventeenth-century young ladies were expected to be able to read French, though the Latin and Greek of their sixteenth-century great-grandmothers was not required of them. Nancy Denton, the madcap daughter of the good doctor, had a tremendous ambition to become a scholar, and wrote to Sir Ralph Verney, whose special favourite she was, telling him she intended to learn Latin, Greek, and Hebrew. " Good sweetheart," he answered,

> bee not soe covetous, beleeve me a Bible (with ye Common Prayer) and a good plaine cattichisme in your Mother Tongue being well read and practised, is well worth all the rest and much more suitable to your sex. In French you cannot be too cunning, for that language affords many admirable books fit for you, as Romances, Plays, Poetry, Stories of illustrious (not learned) Woemen. . . . I will send you halfe a dozen of the french bookes to begin your library.

In the other Royalist homes life was going on in the same outwardly quiet and uneventful fashion. Dr Thomas Browne had lived quietly at Norwich, attending to his patients and his work, all through the Civil War, and he remained there during the Commonwealth. His house was

overflowing with children now, as well as with " books, medals, plants and natural things " ; and the children were being brought up to love the ancient classics and the curious lore that delighted their father. John Evelyn had returned to England, bringing a wife with him, and was living at Sayes Court, Deptford, a beautiful house which he had bought, and where he occupied himself with his pictures, his scientific experiments, and his books. Izaak Walton had given up his London business and was living at a country house in Clerkenwell, where for a short time he had in his charge one of Charles II's rings, known as the lesser George, which had been rescued when the royal baggage fell into the enemy's hands after the battle of Worcester. He tells how, in 1655, he met Dr Sanderson, the famous preacher, accidentally in London, " in sad-coloured clothes, and God knows, far from being costly. The place of our meeting was Little Britain where he had been to buy a book which he then had in his hand." The two Royalists and book-lovers talked together for some time, then, a shower coming on, they went into " a cleanly house, where we had bread, cheese, ale and a fire for our ready money." Here for at least an hour they talked on the " present times," and discussed perhaps Fuller's *Church History*, published in that year, of which the author asked Walton to tell him his own opinion and the opinions he had heard expressed by his friends. Richard Baxter, whom loyalty to the Church had made a Royalist, was a pastor at Kidderminster, doing a great work among his flock, reading the great store of books he had collected and grieving to see death draw near only because, when it came, he must leave his library, and " turn over those pleasant books no more."

Thus the Royalists lived under the rule they hated, looking always to the time when the King should enjoy his own again.

CHAPTER XXII

THE THEATRE OF THE RESTORATION

THE theatres had been closed by order of the Long Parliament in 1642, and they remained officially closed until Charles II came back to England in 1660. But there is no doubt that, especially during the later years of the Commonwealth, the regulations were frequently evaded, and performances were given with more or less secrecy in the half-dismantled playhouses. The plays acted were chiefly "drolls"—that is, short plays of a comic nature. Sometimes these were episodes taken from longer plays, such as the "Bottom" scenes from *A Midsummer Night's Dream*; sometimes they were complete in themselves. Occasionally a body of Puritan soldiers made their way into the theatre and rudely put an end to the performance, but more often it seems to have gone on without interruption. Mrs Sherard, sister of Lady Verney, writing to Sir Ralph in 1656 about her daughter, who is paying a visit to Dr Denton in London, says:

> I hir by the by that Moll hath a great mind to see a play. If they be as they have bin this many eyers [1] tuged to pieces at them, I shall not licke them, so I have refred her to you. If you think as she may goe with safty, I am well content, soe she goes with thos persones as tis fit for her.

This suggests that large audiences attended these plays, and that there was something of a struggle to get in. We do not hear whether Moll went; we wish, if she did, that she had written an account of her experiences to her mother, and that her letter had been preserved among the other Verney papers.

There were strolling companies also that played on village greens and in booths at fairs, or sometimes in the halls of the gentry in parts of the country where religious and political feeling did not run too high; and operas were

[1] years.

occasionally performed more or less openly in London on the plea that they were not plays, but musical entertainments. Still, when all is considered, the playgoer had small opportunity of satisfying his taste during those eighteen years. The younger generation listened with envy while their grandfathers told them of the glories of the theatre and the wonderful audiences that assembled there when the century was young.

As soon as Charles II was settled on the throne the lovers of the drama lost no time in petitioning for the reopening of the theatres. The pleasure-loving King was nothing loth, and on August 21, 1660, less than three months after his entry into London, he issued a patent to Thomas Killigrew and Sir William D'Avenant authorizing them to form two companies of players ; and this was very speedily done. One company was called the King's Players and acted at the Theatre Royal, Drury Lane. For the second, called the Duke of York's Players, a new theatre was built in Lincoln's Inn Fields. An opera-house was also built, and a private theatre, called the Cockpit, for the Court.

Without loss of time the players got to work to produce such plays as they hoped would please the taste of the gay and brilliant Court which was forming round Charles II. The whole country—save the remnant of the Puritans, who for the most part were content to make themselves as little conspicuous as possible—was mad with loyalty. To destroy all traces of the usurping rule of Oliver Cromwell was held to be the plain duty of every Englishman and Englishwoman. Sobriety and decorum of manner, gravity of speech, plainness of dress, strictness of morality, were held to be signs of a hankering after Puritanism and its works ; riotousness and licence pledged a man to the monarchy. The elder generation of Royalists, though they did not approve these excesses, forbore to blame. Even the sober citizen classes were for a time infected with the general madness, and looked with indulgence on roystering and drunkenness, holding that when such great events as the restoration of the English kingship came to pass ordinary rules might be put by.

The playhouses formed a centre and a vent for this spirit of uproarious gaiety, and crowds flocked to see the Elizabethan plays which were hurriedly prepared and produced. But public taste had changed since the beginning of the century. To a Restoration audience Shakespeare seemed dull and uninteresting. John Evelyn, who had hurried to welcome the new king, and was in high favour, went to see *Hamlet* on November 26, 1661, and noted that " now the old plays begin to disgust this refined age, since his Majesty's being so long abroad." Mr Pepys, at this time a clerk in the Navy Office, thought *Romeo and Juliet* " a play of itself the worst that ever I heard," and *A Midsummer Night's Dream* " the most insipid, ridiculous play that ever I saw in my life." *Henry IV* he allowed to be " a good play " and *Macbeth* " a most excellent play for variety."

Beaumont and Fletcher found more favour, and many of their plays were acted. Pepys saw *The Scornfull Lady* in November 1660, and liked it very well, and Evelyn saw it on January 25, 1661, when he visited the theatre for the first time " after divers years." Some of Ben Jonson's plays were well received, and were acted at intervals throughout Charles' reign. On April 16, 1667, Pepys wrote in his diary, " I never was more taken with a play than I am with this *Silent Woman*, as old as it is and as often as I have seen it. There is more wit in it than goes to ten new plays."

For more than two years the playgoers had to content themselves with these old works, in many cases " altered " and " improved " to suit the taste of the times. Occasionally there was produced a new topical play, hastily prepared and slight in character. In these the Puritan was caricatured and held up to ridicule and the Stuart rule was fulsomely lauded. They suited the inflamed loyalty of the moment, and drew crowded audiences; but to the few whose heads were stronger and cooler than those of the generality they seemed puerile and offensive. Even Mr Evelyn, staunch Royalist as he was, called *The Committee*—which told how the dishonest manœuvres of a body of sanctimonious Puritans were brought to nought by two gallant Cavaliers and their lady-loves—" a ridiculous play."

Mr Pepys, however, found it " a very good play and a great deal of good invention in it."

By the beginning of 1663 new plays were driving out the old. Most of these were witty, frivolous, and licentious. Their plots were poor, but, in the best examples, the dialogue was so brilliant, the action so lively, and the characters such perfect representations of the fine ladies and gentlemen of the day that they took the fancy of the town at once, and fixed the type of play which is commonly known as the Restoration drama.

The actors of the time were as brilliant and as entertaining as the plays. Thomas Betterton, who in private life was known as " a very sober, serious man, studious and humble, following of his studies," stood highest in the favour of the audiences. He played both comic and tragic parts, acting Hamlet, Pepys said, " beyond imagination." Pepys and his wife agreed that Betterton was " the best actor in the world." Next came Edward Kynaston, who began playing when he was quite a boy, taking women's parts, as was the custom of the Elizabethan stage. He was a very beautiful boy, and when he acted in *The Silent Woman* Pepys wrote in his diary:

> Kynaston had the good turn to appear in three shapes : first as a poor woman in ordinary clothes to please Morose ; then, in fine clothes, as a gallant, and in them was clearly the prettiest woman in the whole house ; and, lastly, as a man, and likewise did appear the handsomest man in the house.

Before many years had passed there was no more need for boys to take women's parts, for actresses were introduced upon the stage. There was beautiful Mary Davis, who danced as well as acted, and Mrs Knipp, " the most excellent, mad-humoured thing and sings the noblest that ever I heard in my life " ; and " pretty, witty Nell Gwynn," excellent in comedy, but a failure in more serious parts. Pepys saw her in Dryden's *The Mayden Queene*. " There is a comical part done by Nell," he said,

> which is Florimell, that I never can hope to see the like done again, by man or woman. . . . So great a performance of a comical part was never I believe in the world before as Nell do

> this, both as a mad girl, then most and best of all when she comes in like a young gallant; and hath the motions and carriage of a spark the most that ever I saw any man have. It makes me, I confess, admire her.

But a little later, when he saw her in *The Indian Emperour*, he was " most infinitely displeased with her being put to act the Emperour's daughter, which is a great and serious part, which she does most basely."

It was not only to see the play that the fashionable gallants and ladies flocked to the theatre. They went to talk, to flirt, to show their fine dresses, to see the latest fashions and hear the latest scandal. The theatre became a social centre for the fashionable classes, who took possession of it so completely that the ordinary Londoner left off going at all. The cheaper parts of the house were filled with noisy apprentices, footmen and horse-boys, and the riffraff of the town, but the merchant, the country gentleman, and the professional man kept strictly away.

Mr Pepys, who, although he was only an official of the Admiralty, considered himself a very fashionable person, went frequently to the theatre. At first he was content with a seat in the cheaper parts of the house, " going for several years no higher than the 12^{d} and 18^{d} places." On one occasion he was " troubled to be seen by four of our office clerks, which sat in the half-crown box and I in the one and ten." Later he habitually paid half a crown to go into the pit, which was the favourite place for all except those of the very highest rank. The first time he ever sat in a box was in October 1667, when he went to see Lord Orrery's play *The Black Prince*, and that was because there was no room in the pit. His conscience was never quite easy about the time and the money he spent in playgoing. " Troubled in mind that I cannot bring myself to mind my business, but to be so much in love of plays," he wrote in his diary; and, again, " Strange to see how my mind do revert to its former practice of loving plays and wine." He constantly made vows that he would go to the theatre only a certain number of times in a month, and he regularly broke those vows. " To my chamber," he wrote, " and

do begin anew to bind myself to keep my old vows, and among the rest not to see a play till Christmas but once in every other week, and have laid aside £10 which is to be lost to the poor if I do." But even the thought of this forfeit—which meant a good deal to Mr Pepys, for he was a careful man, and loved his money—could not enable him to resist temptation. Sometimes a friend would pay for him, and then, of course, that visit did not count. Sometimes he would secretly give a friend money to pay for him and his wife. He had promised Mrs Pepys that he would not go to the theatre without her, but very often he did, and lived in fear for weeks afterward lest some one who had seen him there should mention it casually to her. And sometimes—incredible meanness!—when he had for some reason omitted to take his wife at one of the stipulated times, he would go twice by himself, arguing that his vow was not broken, since only the money agreed upon had been spent.

If worthy Master Simon Nocker, who by this time had probably been dead some fifty years, could have taken flesh once more and walked down from his shop on Cornhill one dull afternoon in February 1668 to visit the Duke's Playhouse there would have been many surprises in store for him. He would not have been obliged to start as early as he had done when he had seen *Julius Cæsar* at the Globe, for the performance did not begin until three o'clock; but the Stuart dinner hour was one, instead of midday, so it would still have behoved Mistress Nocker to be punctual.

The play that afternoon was a new comedy by Sir George Etherege, one of the dissolute Court wits who were winning favour with the King for their brilliant parts and scandalizing all sober citizens by their riotous living. It was called *She Would if She Could*, and when the playbills announcing it had been put out there had been great excitement among all playgoers in the town. Etherege was a notorious character, and his first play, *The Comical Revenge; or Love in a Tub*, produced four years before, was still a great favourite.

Master Nocker, orderly and punctual in all his ways, arrived about half an hour before the time the play was to begin, as had always been his custom. But long before

that time the audience had been gathering. By two o'clock the pit was full, and a crowd of noisy, grumbling people were reluctantly turning away from its door. The Elizabethan merchant must, though it grieved his thrifty soul, pay four shillings to go into the boxes, and be grateful that a place could be found for him even at that price.

Seated at last, he looked around him. First he noticed that the theatre was entirely covered by a roof and that the stage was not built out into the body of the theatre, as it had been in his day. But he did not stay to mark any further changes, for he was more interested in the audience than in the building. In the pit below him was a company very different from the "groundlings" of the Globe Theatre when Elizabeth was queen. Here were fine gentlemen and ladies, the ladies wearing no masks, nor sitting, inconspicuous and quiet, in retired seats, but flaunting themselves boldly, talking and laughing loudly, calling to friends in other parts of the house, ogling the gentlemen. Master Nocker could scarcely believe his eyes. They could not be women of good birth, wives and daughters of men of rank such as the Cornhill draper had been accustomed to look up to with much respect; and yet their dress and the assurance of their bearing seemed to say that they were.

There was a stir in the house, and everybody rose and looked toward a box near the stage. Master Nocker looked with the others. A dark-complexioned, pleasant-looking gentleman, richly dressed, came into the box and sat down in the front, bowing and smiling graciously in answer to the salutations of the audience. He was followed by a bevy of ladies and gentlemen even more gorgeously attired than he was. Some came into the box with him, some seated themselves in other boxes near by. There was a great deal of laughter and noise and bustle, and every one round about Master Nocker was saying, "The King! The King!"

It could not be. When the great Elizabeth had wished to see a play she had commanded the players to attend at her private playhouse at Greenwich or Whitehall; and on the few occasions when she had come into one of the public theatres she had come in state, receiving with majestic

graciousness the loyal homage of a grateful and delighted people. This brown-faced, smiling gentleman, who lolled in his chair and chatted easily with his splendid lords-in-waiting, had, in the eyes of an Elizabethan, little of majesty about him.

Master Nocker turned toward the gallery, where a crowd of 'prentice-boys and serving-men were huddled together. They were noisy, but it was with the rough, good-humoured noisiness that was familiar to him and that seemed natural to their class. He preferred it to the shrill laughter and affected voices of their betters.

He did not notice Mr Pepys, who was there in the eighteen-penny boxes that day, and in a mighty bad temper, as he himself would have said. He could not find his wife, who had gone on before him with a friend, and had found a place in the pit, which, when he arrived later, had been quite full. The seat that he got at last was a very bad one, " mightily behind," where he " could see little and hear not at all." Mrs Pepys was young, very pretty, and rather flighty, and her husband did not like her to go to places of entertainment without his escort. So he kept uneasily wriggling in his unfavourable seat, peering forward and trying to spy her out in the pit. But he could see nothing, and at length the curtain was drawn, and in a very ill humour he turned his attention to the play.

Master Nocker too turned gladly to the stage after his disappointing survey of the audience. A good play had always given him great delight and taken his thoughts from disagreeable matters, and he had great hopes that he was about to spend a pleasant hour or two. On the stage were two fine gentlemen, the exact counterparts of those he could see around him in the audience. They were talking together in a jargon of which he could make very little, though the conversation seemed to be witty, for every now and then came a shrill burst of laughter from the house. Then there entered a waiting-maid, and Master Nocker started. Surely that was no boy ; and yet—a woman on the stage ! He could not believe it. He tried to drive the idea from his mind ; but after two more fine gentlemen had appeared, and

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From Kirkman's *The Wits.*

there had been laughter and horseplay and more jesting, came another woman character—a fine lady this time. And now Master Nocker was sure he was not mistaken. This was indeed no boy, but a real woman, languishing and ogling and talking about her lovers in a way that seemed to the worthy linen-draper to show her the most depraved of her kind. He did not know that the actress was the wife of Thomas Shadwell, the Poet Laureate, and it would have made little difference to him if he had known it. His opinion of her would have remained the same.

He had a mind to leave the house, but curiosity and a determination to see the worst kept him in his place. He sat doggedly on, giving close attention to the stage, and at the end he said to himself scornfully that here had been a play with much talk and bustle and commotion all about nothing at all. It had no plot, and nothing particular happened ; all the characters were fine ladies and gentlemen and their servants, with little to distinguish one from another, except perhaps that some were a shade less dissolute than their fellows. They rushed about from one place of amusement to another ; they drank, and sang, and jested ; they made appointments with other people's wives and lovers, and when they were in danger of detection they lied wittily and amusingly, and so escaped ; they hid in cupboards, they disguised themselves with masks, they intercepted letters, they bribed waiting-maids; and through it all they talked —brilliantly, entertainingly, indecently. That was what Master Nocker made of Sir George Etherege's *She Would if She Could.*

He turned to his neighbour, a young gallant, one of a noisy company that had been making unmannerly remarks on the queer old fellow in his ancient garb.

"What think you of this play?" he asked. The applause that had followed it had not been hearty, and there had been a few hisses ; and he was anxious to know whether he had seen a really good example of the drama of the day.

The young man stared insolently, and his companions broke into a shout of rude laughter.

"The play is well enough," he answered; "'tis witty and pleasant. But, Lord! the acting is not such as a man looks for at the Duke's Playhouse."

"Do you never have the plays of Master William Shakespeare on the stage in these days?" asked the loyal Elizabethan.

The young man affected to look puzzled. "Shakespeare?" he said. "Ah, he who writ *Hamlet* and *Henry IV*? They have been acted, but the town holds them dull, save those which Mr Dryden and Mr Shadwell have rewritten."

Rewritten Shakespeare! It was the final blow. No Elizabethan reincarnation could hear of such sacrilege and continue to exist.

When the young man looked round his queer old neighbour had disappeared.

CHAPTER XXIII

MR PEPYS AND HIS BOOKS

MR PEPYS came out of his house in Seething Lane on a fine August afternoon in the year 1667 and walked with the easy step of a man of fashion westward down Eastcheap and Cannon Street toward St Paul's Churchyard. He wore a black camelot suit with scarlet ribbons, which his wife had told him became him most nobly, a black beaver hat, a belt, and a silver-hilted sword. His periwig with its flowing locks was in the latest mode, and altogether he was mightily contented with his appearance. He had risen at four that morning and worked hard at the Navy Office until noon, proving, as he said, "what a deal of business goes by a man's hand when he stays by it." Then he had gone back to his comfortable house, which was next door to the office, and had dined happily with his wife on a good venison pasty and a sirloin of roast beef. He felt now that he might spend the day as he pleased; and his pleasure led him, as it often did—too often, he was wont to reflect ruefully when he balanced his accounts according to his careful custom at the end of each month—to his booksellers. Mr Pepys loved books—not quite as well perhaps as he loved the theatre or music, but well enough to find it difficult not to spend on them more money than he could afford.

When he came to St Paul's Churchyard he stood still, and looked for a few minutes at the ruin caused by the Great Fire. A year ago he had been used to come here for his books. Just opposite him had stood the shop of Joseph Kirton, with the sign of the King's Arms, where he had spent many hours turning over and choosing books and gossiping with the bookseller and his customers. Now it was a heap of ruins, like the other shops and bookstalls that had lined the churchyard, and the great cathedral itself was scorched

and blackened and partly burned. Men were driving great stakes into the ground to mark out the fine new road that was to be made, but little had yet been done. Mr Pepys sighed as he thought of the many books he had often looked upon covetously, fingering the money in his pocket; they had perished miserably, falling row by row before the fierce enemy fire.

But there was little to be got by mourning over the ruins of these much-desired books. So on went Mr Pepys, down Ludgate Hill and Fleet Street and so to the Temple; and there into a bookshop which, although he had frequented it for four months, he still called "my new bookseller's." Here was a company of near a score gathered, with much talking and merriment going on. Mr Pepys, standing by the door, looked round. There was a group of fashionable young gallants near by him, discussing the latest news, there were two or three grave-looking divines, there were several footmen waiting to carry home the books which their masters were choosing. At the other end of the shop, intent upon books that they had taken from the shelves, were a half-dozen or so of scholarly-looking gentlemen, among them one, very handsome and noble-looking, who was deep in a learned volume.

He was older than Mr Pepys by about twelve years, and more staid and dignified in his demeanour, but as soon as Mr Pepys espied him he passed by the younger men—who, knowing him for a good gossip, would have had him join them—and came joyfully toward the reader. For this was Mr Evelyn of Wotton, high in the King's favour, and secretary of the newly established Royal Society, of which Mr Pepys was a member.

The two stood and chatted together of the news of the day; of the mismanagement of the Dutch War, and of how the King was so given up to his pleasures that he took little concern for the ruin of his country; of the death of Mr Abraham Cowley, the poet; of the scarcity and high prices of books, owing to so many having been destroyed in the Great Fire.

"I bought lately," said Mr Pepys, "Rycaut's *History of*

the Turkish Policy, which cost me fifty-five shillings, whereas it was sold plain before the late fire for eight shillings and bound and coloured as mine is for twenty shillings ; all but twenty-two copies or thereabouts having been burned."

" 'Tis said," replied Mr Evelyn, with a grave shake of the head, " that £150,000 worth of books were lost and some of the booksellers utterly undone, not only their shops, but their warehouses at their Hall and under Christ Church and elsewhere being clean destroyed. Our old friend, Joseph Kirton, so his kinsman has told me, from being worth seven or eight thousand pounds, is now two or three thousand worse than nothing, and is so overcome with sorrow and difficulties that he is like to die."

" A great want there will be of books, especially of Latin and foreign books," lamented Mr Pepys, " such few copies of the Polyglot Bible as are left will, it is said, be presently worth forty pounds apiece."

The two booklovers shook their heads sorrowfully, and the bookseller, who had just dispatched a footman with a great parcel of books, shook his head too.

" ' Tis so, indeed," he said, " and yet the ladies and gentlemen of the Court do still demand their books, as if the fire had consumed nought and a man had but to order more copies to fill up his shelves as soon as they grew empty. My Lady Temple, Sir William's wife, is newly arrived from Ireland, and has sent but now for all the romances that have appeared while she has been away. She desires, too, new copies of some that I sent her when she was Mistress Dorothy Osborne and lived at Chicksands ; and how to get them all in the present scarcity passes my wit. Yon fellow has just taken for her Mlle de Scudéry's *Illustre Bassa* and Scarron's *Les Trois Dorothées* and the last volumes of Calprenède's *Cléopâtre* and Sir George Mackenzie's *Aretina*. It is the same with all the ladies, in the country as well as in the town. When they read in the newsbooks that a romance has been printed, at once come their servants, demanding copies."

" My wife loves these romances mightily," remarked Mr Pepys. " I have bought her *Le Grand Cyrus* in twelve volumes, as well as some others ; and she and her maids too

read and talk of them till I am weary to hear their clatter. These French tales truly have taken possession of our women, so that they will read naught else."

There came up a young man, handsomely dressed, with lace ruffles and long curls and a jewelled sword.

"See now, Mr Bookseller," he said, "'tis the second time I have come to ask for Mr Dryden's *Mayden Queene*, and your man still tells me that you have it not."

"It has not yet been printed, my lord," replied the bookseller, "and I know not Mr Dryden's will in the matter. Will you have some other of his plays—*The Wild Gallant* or *The Rival Ladies*?"

"These are old," said the gentleman in a rage. "'Tis the new play I am seeking. I must needs find some other bookseller." And out he went, very haughty and angry.

The bookseller turned to Mr Evelyn and Mr Pepys. "Since the King did so commend the play there come all who would be in the fashion to buy it," he said, "and will not believe it is not yet printed."

"I saw it acted at the King's House in March," said Mr Pepys, "and liked it well. There is a comical part done by Nell Gwynn, and so great a performance was never, I believe, in the world before, as Nell do this. It would be great gain to you if the play could be printed while yet the town is eager to read it."

"Indeed," said a gay young gentleman, coming over from the group by the door. "Mr Dryden's plays are mighty pleasant reading, better than any romance that ever was writ. I like not so well his *Annus Mirabilis* that all the town is talking of. Love and beauty do draw me more than war and plague and fire."

"Yet the poem has much wit," said another, "though not so much as Mr Butler's *Hudibras*."

At this several of the company cried out in agreement, and Mr Evelyn said, "There has not been so witty a poem published these many years." Then one and another fell to quoting lines from the poem, with much applause from the rest. Mr Pepys felt vexed, and a little troubled. Nearly four years before, soon after the first part of *Hudibras* had

been published, hearing it greatly praised, he had bought a copy for two shillings and sixpence. But when he had come to read it he had found it, as he thought, so silly that he had been ashamed of it ; and finding a friend ready to buy it he had sold it for eighteenpence. Then about a month later, finding that all the world still cried up the book to be the great example of wit, he had resolved to read it once more. So he had bought another copy and read it through two or three times, trying to bring himself to think it witty, but still failing, and though he had bought the second part when it had come out, since it was the book in the greatest fashion for drollery, he still owned to himself that he could not find where the wit lay. This vexed him greatly, for he did not like to be out of the fashion ; and now as he listened to the laughter and applause of his companions it vexed him again. He joined in the laughter and applause, for he would not for the world have had his lack of taste known, but he was glad when one of the company said, " Enough of *Hudibras* and its wit. Give me a good song, such as that which Sir Charles Sedley lately writ, *Phyllis is my Only Joy*," and he began to sing it, the rest of the company—bookseller, footmen, customers, and all—joining in tunefully. Mr Pepys bore his part with good-will. Here he felt no inferiority to the rest, for he had a fine voice and loved singing ; so they went through the song with great delight.

It was time now for Mr Pepys to give his order and be going on his way. So he told the bookseller to keep for him a copy of Sir John Denham's poems and Mrs Katherine Philips' poems, which were to be published shortly, and then he and Mr Evelyn turned to leave.

" There is a poem by John Milton, he who was secretary to Cromwell, just come out," said the bookseller. " It has the title *Paradise Lost*, and concerns the creation of the world ; its cost is three shillings."

The two Royalists frowned in displeasure. " ' Tis a pestilent fellow," declared Mr Evelyn. " I marvel that he is allowed to print his sedition."

" His poem should be given to the hangman for burning," declared Mr Pepys, " as were his other works and his *Tenure*

of Kings, for reissuing which the printer was hanged but three years ago last April."

"Yet Mr Dryden says it is a rare poem," persisted the bookseller.

But the two staunch Royalists would have nothing to say to John Milton. They left the shop and walked on together, talking of their books, those they had and those they wished for. Mr Evelyn had already a noble collection in his fine library at Wotton, and Mr Pepys had, for the last six or seven years, been buying as many as he could afford, of all sorts and on all subjects. As he listened to the older and more experienced reader his enthusiasm was kindled, and for a time the book-lover in him came uppermost; so that when he left his friend he hastened home, resolved that that night he would go to no play or merrymaking, but would spend the evening in the company of his books.

When supper was over he went up to his study, which was the pride of his heart. As long ago as February 1664 he had begun getting his books rebound, so that they might be all of one binding, and when they were finished he walked up and down his study looking at them, and thinking them, as he says, a beautiful sight. By July 1666 the number of his books had so increased that they more than filled his shelves, and he was forced to pile them up on chairs; and this distressed him, for often he could not find the book he wanted without much trouble and searching. So he sent for Simpson the joiner, and consulted with him as to the making and fitting of presses in such a way as to take the largest possible number of books. Before the end of August these presses were finished, to Mr Pepys' "most extraordinary satisfaction"; and now he thought he had "as noble a closet as any man." Then the idea came to him of having the backs of all his books gilded, but before he could carry this out came the Great Fire. In haste he packed up all his property, including his precious books, in boxes and hampers, some of which he buried in his garden, sending some in carts to Sir William Rider's at Bethnal Green. When the danger was over he had them brought back, and with the help of Simpson and his boy set them up on the

shelves once more. He worked until two o'clock in the morning, and when he went to bed was mightily troubled, even in his sleep, because four or five of his biggest books were missing, including Speed's *Chronicle* and some maps. But these turned up the next day with three more that he had not missed, the hamper containing them having been taken for a hamper of wine and sent elsewhere. Then for two or three days Mr Pepys was happily busy getting them in order again, and by the end of September was ready for the bookbinder to come and gild the books according to his plans. This was done a few at a time, and Mr Pepys gloated over each batch of volumes as he put them back in their places.

So on this August evening when he came up to his study everything was in order, with well-fitting presses and neatly arranged books, just as he loved it to be. He put on the green spectacles that he had lately bought because his eyes were troubling him, and took out the catalogue he had made ; and, seeing how many books he had bought since it was finished, he resolved very soon to make another with better arrangement and classification.

Then he fell to taking out one book after another, reading a page here and there, and recalling how it had come into his possession and what pleasure he had had out of it. He thought of the times when he had gone to Kirton's with thirty shillings, or later, as his circumstances improved, with six or seven pounds in his pocket to spend on books ; how the bookseller's store had been spread out before him, and how he had spent a delightful hour turning over the books and dipping into one after another ; and at last, very carefully, had made his choice. He remembered how he had often felt alarmed when he had made up his accounts at the end of the month at the large sums he had spent in this way, and had resolved to be more sparing in the future ; and how, at his next visit to St Paul's Churchyard, he had been unable to resist some alluring new publication, and had fallen once more.

There was his copy of Chaucer, one of the earliest books he had bought, and which he had had handsomely rebound,

with clasps and bosses, according to his own design. This book of French Psalms, with Bacon's *Novum Organum*, he had bought at The Hague when he had gone over with my Lord Montagu's embassy on business in connexion with the recalling of Charles II. Here was Hooker's *Ecclesiastical Polity*, which his friend Mr Moore had given him, and Hobbes' *Liberty and Necessity*, which Mr Pepys considered "a little but very shrewd piece."

He was interested in history, especially that of his own and recent times, and had a fairly good collection of historical books. He had Camden's *Britannia*, a second-hand copy, *The Rise and Fall of the Stuarts*, *The Court of King James*, and lives of Cromwell, Laud, and Cavendish. He had Fuller's *Worthies of England*, in which he had looked anxiously for some mention of his own family, "being much troubled that . . . he says nothing at all, nor mentions us either in Cambridgeshire or Norfolke. But I believe, indeed," he acknowledged, "our family were never considerable." He had Dugdale's *History of the Inns of Court*, Sprat's *History of the Royal Society*, and Rushworth's *Collections*. He bought most of the pamphlets and tracts as they came out, and had a fine collection of them, including *The Way to be Rich*, according to the practice of the great Audley, who began with two hundred pounds in 1605 and died worth four hundred thousand in 1662. Of this tract Pepys gravely noted that it had "some good things worth my minding." On foreign history he had a *History of China* and a *History of Algiers*, which latter he had chosen to read aloud to his wife when her face was "miserably swelled so as I was frighted to see it." He found it "mighty pretty reading," but he does not say what his wife thought of it.

He had a few scientific books, Boyle's *Hydrostatics* and *Book of Colours* and Hook's *Book of Microscopy*. He does not seem to have cared particularly for the ancient classics, though he kept always "a little book of Latin plays" in his pocket. He had a copy of Lilly's *Latin Grammar*, which had been given to him by Mr Crumlum, the master of Paul's School, where he had been educated. It was "of a very old impression, as it was in the Catholique times, which I shall

much set by." This was probably given him in acknowledgment of his gift to the school of Stephens' *Thesaurus*, which cost him four pounds ten.

There was on his shelves a very curious book called *Herba Parietis; or The Wall-flower as it grew out of the Stone Chamber belonging to Newgate*, and he remembered reading this for the first time " with great pleasure " in a boat coming up from Gravesend. There was " *Iter Boreale*, a poem, made first at the King's coming home." He had read it to his wife, and they liked it " pretty well, but not so as it was cried up." He had a little book of Cowley's poems, given him by the poet's brother, and *Scarronides, or Virgile Travesty* by Charles Cotton, which he found " extraordinarily good." He had Shakespeare's plays, and he recalled now as he looked at them how one winter evening he had stayed with his wife within doors getting a speech out of *Hamlet*, " to bee or not to bee," without book. He had Mr Evelyn's book *Public Employment and an Active Life with its Appenages preferred to Solitude* and his *Sylva*, given him by the author. He had a large store of plays, which were commonly read then as novels are to-day, and a number of poems and romances. He had a large collection of French books, and of some of these he was rather ashamed, and kept them hidden away behind the other books on his shelves. There was one,

> an idle, roguish French book which I have bought in plain binding, avoiding buying it better bound because I resolve as soon as I have read it to burn it, that it may not stand in the list of books nor among them to disgrace them if it should be found.

Long before Mr Pepys had tired of looking over his shelves it was time to go to bed. He had spent a delightful evening, and felt far more contented than he often did when he came home from a play or a feast. As he went to his bedchamber he made one of those good resolutions which came generally with his casting up of accounts at the end of the month —he would spend many evenings in this way to the benefit both of his purse and of his conscience.

CHAPTER XXIV

THE COFFEE-HOUSES AND THE NEWSPAPERS

THE growth of a reading public in England, which brought about such a great increase in the production of books, had effects in other directions also. Reading gave men new interests and opened to them a larger world. It set them thinking on subjects that were strange and unfamiliar; and, having thought, they wanted to tell their thoughts and hear the thoughts of others; to set their ideas in order by argument and discussion.

In the days of Elizabeth this want was partly met by the theatre, which was a general meeting-place, and where there was free and eager discussion on questions raised by the play. There were famous meetings, too, at the taverns. Shakespeare and Ben Jonson and their following held high discourse at the Mermaid, the Sun, the Dog, the Triple Tun; but these meetings were for a small company of wits and poets, and served the common man only as an inspiration.

Then came the rule of the first two Stuarts, followed by the Commonwealth. Slowly dissension grew, until the nation was divided into two great parties. For more than forty years the fierce debating of religious and political questions at all times and in all places made peaceful intellectual intercourse almost impossible. Only here and there, as we have seen, a band of gentler spirits kept up some interest in the things that belong to pure knowledge.

These times, too, passed, and the Restoration came, with its intense reaction, its loosening of the ties that men had felt most binding, its cheapening of all that they had held most precious. There was leisure now for thinking and discussion, and there was no danger that undue seriousness would turn intellectual encounters into bitter struggles of spirit against spirit. The temper of the nation was restless,

pleasure-loving, and social. No topic was too sacred to be talked about, and few were too trivial to be interesting. It was clear that the time had come for the setting up of centres half social, half intellectual in their purpose, where news and gossip and light controvesy and witty interchange of thought were to be had for the seeking.

Where could such centres be found? Theatre-going had become a mere fashionable function. The taverns were filled with a riotous company too noisy and too drunken for hope of rational conversation. The bookshops, though they served a limited company well, could not be turned to large and general uses. Chance, as it seemed, decided the question, and made the coffee-houses of the town the resort for which men had been seeking.

Coffee-houses had originated during the Commonwealth. In 1652 an English merchant returning from Turkey brought with him as his servant an Albanian youth named Pasquia Rosée. This youth brewed coffee for his master every morning at the George and Vulture on Cornhill; and as the strange, delicious fragrance spread through the house servants and guests alike were drawn toward the place where the dark-skinned youth was deftly pouring out the steaming liquid for his master's breakfast. They looked and sniffed and wondered, and some of them desired to taste; which having done, they quickly became regular coffee-drinkers. Their numbers increased, and soon the new beverage became famous. The demand for it grew so great that Rosée set up a house for the sale of coffee in St Michael's Alley. His venture prospered, and soon other coffee-houses were established in other parts of London. From the first these houses had a distinct character of their own as places where a man might sit quietly with his friends and talk or read the news-sheets which were provided.

Such was the coffee-house when Charles II came to the throne, and the men of the Restoration soon perceived how well it was fitted to become the meeting-place they were looking for. The coffee-houses began to fill with a stream of customers who came to talk and to listen as well as to drink coffee. Men of similar interests drew naturally

together, so that each house became known as the haunt of a particular class. The fine gentlemen went to White's or St James's, in St James's Street. The wits and the poets went to Will's, at the corner of Russell Street, Covent Garden, the scholars to the Grecian, in the Strand. Templars, surgeons, and members of the Royal Society went to Garraway's, in Exchange Alley, or the Rainbow, in Fleet Street, stockbrokers and Jews to Jonathan's, in Exchange Alley.

Mr Pepys, who always took care to be in the fashion, was one of the early frequenters of the coffee-houses. "At the Coffee-house," he wrote in his diary for January 27, 1664,

> where I sat with Sir G. Ascue[1] and William Petty,[2] who in discourse is, methinks, one of the most rational men ever I heard speak with a tongue, having all his notions the most distinct and clear, and did among other things (saying that in all his life these three books were the most esteemed and generally cried up for wit in the world, *Religio Medici*, Osborne's *Advice to a Son*, and *Hudibras*) say that in these—the two first principally—the wit lies in confirming some pretty sayings which are generally like paradoxes, by some argument smartly and pleasantly urged, which takes with people who do not trouble themselves to examine the force of an argument, which pleases them in the delivery upon a subject which they like.

This was a fine theme for a coffee-house discussion, and brought forth, we may be sure, much lively comment and emphatic expression of opinion, Mr Pepys seeing to it that he made his voice heard with the others.

A few days afterward, going late in the evening to fetch his wife home from her father's, Mr Pepys dropped in at Will's Coffee-house, where, he says,

> I never was before, where were Dryden (the poet I knew at Cambridge), and all the wits of the town, and Harris the player, and Mr Hoole of our College. And had I had time then, or could at other times, it will be good coming thither, for there, I perceive, is very witty and pleasant discourse. But I could not tarry, and as it was very late, they were all ready to go away.

Whether Mr Pepys ever went again to that famous room above the haberdasher's shop we do not know; but if he

[1] A distinguished naval officer. [2] A physician.

did he almost certainly found Dryden there, sitting in his own especial armchair, which was placed on the balcony in summer and by the fire in winter, and from which the old dictator gave judgment in all literary matters, " cavils about the turn of expression, elegancies of style and the like."

The coffee-houses, as well as being meeting-places for discussion, were also centres for the hearing of news. To them rumours of every kind quickly and naturally made their way. The newsletters, and later on the newspapers, were there to be read by all who came. The first printed newspaper, called *The London Gazette,* was established in 1665. It came out on Mondays and Thursdays, and contained but a scanty supply of news—according to Macaulay,

> a royal proclamation, two or three Tory addresses, notice of two or three promotions, an account of a skirmish between the Imperial troops and the Janissaries on the Danube, a description of a highwayman, an announcement of a grand cockfight between two persons of honour, an advertisement offering a reward for a strayed dog. . . . The most important Parliamentary debates, the most important State trials in our history were passed over in profound silence.

In April 1681 came *The Observator, in Question and Answer,* published by Roger L'Estrange, a well-known Royalist pamphleteer. Its issue was irregular, but there were usually three or four numbers in a week. It was in the form of question and answer, and it contained very little news, very little of anything, in fact, except abuse of those with whom the writer did not agree on questions of religion and politics—Dissenters, Whigs, Trimmers, and Titus Oates. In 1686 it was suppressed, and various short-lived newspapers appeared as rivals to the *Gazette.* In 1695 the Licensing Act was allowed to lapse, and a crop of new papers at once sprang up.

By this time the two political parties in the kingdom had gained the names of Whig and Tory, and each party had newspapers supporting it. *The Flying Post* was on the side of the Whigs, *The Post Boy* of the Tories. In 1702 came the first of the dailies, *The Daily Courant,* and in 1704 Daniel

Defoe started his *Review*, which was a real newspaper containing reliable news, both home and foreign, and was moderate and well informed in its political articles.

All these and many more were to be read at the coffee-houses, as well as piles of pamphlets and tracts.

Every year added to the popularity of the coffee-houses and to their importance in the life of the capital, especially in that of the middle classes, who frequented them in ever-increasing numbers.

> Now whither shall a person wearied with hard study or the laborious turmoil of a tedious day repair to refresh himself? Or where can young gentlemen or shopkeepers more innocently and advantageously spend an hour or two in the evening than at the coffee-house?

asks the author of *The Coffee House Vindicated* in 1675.

> To read men is acknowledged more useful than books; but where is there a better library for that study, generally, than here; among such a variety of humours, all expressing themselves on various subjects according to their respective abilities?

Their influence was in every respect good and useful to the Londoners who came to them evening after evening. The coffee-house was a place where men were bound to behave with some degree of courtesy and consideration for their neighbours, where rough manners would not be tolerated, where each must think of the common good. A man must take care that his personal habits were not unpleasant to those with whom he associated and that his dress came up to the common standard of neatness and cleanliness. The ideal that the coffee-houses set up was not, perhaps, a very high one, but it was high enough to make a real difference for the better in the lives of a large number of middle-class Londoners.

Other influences were tending in the same direction. The Court party was becoming more and more a class apart. The rest of the nation had, before many years had gone by, recovered from the effects of the moral turmoil which had been caused by the Restoration and had set up their old standards of conduct or, possibly, standards which were slightly higher. Judged by these, the highest class

of society disgusted by its dissoluteness and frivolity. The great merchants and wealthy citizens whose ambition in earlier days would have been to join this class were eager now to make the separation between themselves and the nobility as marked as possible. A soberness and decorum, due at first to the shocked reaction from the excesses of the Restoration period, began to be cultivated by the best type of Londoner, and this example had a great influence on the citizens as a whole. By the opening of the eighteenth century the effect was very clearly to be seen. There was still much in the manners of middle-class Londoners which to modern ideas would seem revoltingly coarse and unpleasing, but there was a real improvement and a real desire to improve still further.

Early in the century a new force came to help on this movement toward morality and gentler manners. On April 12, 1709, appeared the first number of a new periodical called *The Tatler*. It was, the editor announced in his opening article, to be in the main a newspaper, giving the most reliable foreign and domestic news; but it would also contain articles on learning and on literature, on conduct and on morals. "The general purpose of this paper," he declared,

> is to expose the false arts of life, to pull off the disguises of cunning, vanity, and affectation, and to recommend a general simplicity in our dress, our discourse, and our behaviour.

The Tatler soon became extremely popular. It was specially addressed to the frequenters of the coffee-houses, and each number as it came out was to be found in the many establishments which were now flourishing throughout the city. Men read it eagerly, and discussed its contents not only with their companions at the coffee-house, but with their wives and daughters at home, for the editor had announced that it was one of his ambitions to provide reading for the female sex, who were certainly at that time ill catered for.

Before long *The Tatler* was to be found in the houses of most well-to-do citizens. Its readers were more interested in its articles on social matters than in its news, and therefore

these articles were allowed to occupy more and more space in the paper. Every one was anxious to read what the editor, Richard Steele, a man of breeding and fashion, had to say on good manners, courtesy, simplicity, honourable dealing, consideration for the weak and helpless. Groping as they were after an ideal of life higher and finer than that which had contented their fathers, they found something of what they sought in the pages of this modest little paper.

On January 2, 1711, the last issue of *The Tatler* was announced, and on March 1 of the same year appeared the first number of a new paper, *The Spectator*. In this enterprise Joseph Addison, who had written various articles for *The Tatler*, was associated with Richard Steele. *The Spectator* gave no news. Each of its daily numbers contained a single essay on manners, morals, or literature. The essays took various forms, and were sometimes playful and sometimes serious, though the general tone was light. There were delightful little character-sketches, including those of the famous Sir Roger de Coverley and his friends, and many humorous anecdotes illustrating the fashions of the times. Occasionally there was a short story, generally from some classical original, and on Saturdays a paper on a religious subject which might give matter for meditation on Sunday, on which day no *Spectator* was issued.

The Spectator speedily became more popular than *The Tatler* had ever been. Not only the middle classes for whom it was designed, but fine ladies and gentlemen also read and admired it. "It is with much satisfaction," wrote Addison on March 12, in the tenth number,

> that I hear this great city enquiring day by day after these my papers, and receiving my morning lectures with becoming seriousness and attention. My publisher tells me that there are already three thousand of them distributed every day. So that if I allow twenty readers to every paper, which I look upon as a modest computation, I may reckon about threescore thousand disciples in London and Westminster, who I hope will take care to distinguish themselves from the thoughtless herd of their ignorant and inattentive brethren. . . . It was said of Socrates that he brought philosophy down from heaven to inhabit among

COFFEE-HOUSE POLITICIANS

From a satirical print published in 1733

> men; and I shall be ambitious to have it said of me that I have brought philosophy out of closets and libraries, schools and colleges, to dwell in clubs and assemblies, at tea-tables and coffee-houses.

The particular coffee-house which Addison and Steele themselves frequented was Button's, in Russell Street. It was kept by an old servant of Addison's, named Daniel Button. Dryden had died in 1700, and with him the glory had departed from Will's Coffee-house. The centre of literary London had shifted to Button's over the way. Here Addison held his court, as Dryden had held his, but with a far greater urbanity and politeness. The influence of Addison and Steele on the crowd that gathered evening by evening to hear them discourse over cups of coffee and chocolate was similar to that which *The Spectator* exercised over the citizens at large. Courtesy and forbearance, refinement of manners, mirth without coarseness, and argument without abuse—all these things were taught and practised at Button's.

The Spectator came to an end in December 1712. It is probable that Addison and Steele felt that such a paper could not be continued indefinitely without danger of monotony and staleness. They believed that it had done its work, and they preferred to bring it to an end while it was still popular and highly considered. Many newspapers had by this time come into existence, and during the next forty years the number increased rapidly. Some attempts were made to imitate *The Spectator*, but none was very successful. Addison and Steele had judged rightly that the day of such papers was past. Even when, nearly forty years later, Dr Johnson issued his *Rambler*, which was on similar lines, it appealed to a very limited public, and few copies were sold.

The vogue of the coffee-houses was passing also. They too had done their work. The spread of the habit of reading and the increase of literature, which served for pleasure and recreation, helped the general tendency of the time toward the establishment of a fuller home-life among the middle class. Men read at home, with their wives and their children

about them, and turned from the semi-public life of the coffee-house. Many of these became transformed into clubs which had their own particular members and served as meeting-places for groups of friends and associates, where the meetings were of a more private and social character than the general assembly at the coffee-houses.

CHAPTER XXV

READERS OF FASHION

WHEN Charles II died the brilliant Court that he had gathered round him broke up. James II, dour and bigoted, could not take the place of his gracious, graceless brother. William III when he came to the throne had greater things to occupy him than the re-assembling of the scattered splendours of a Court, even if his Dutch boorishness had not set the task beyond him. Society became to some extent disorganized, and when things settled down again in the calmer times of mild Queen Anne it was seen that there had been a considerable readjustment of classes.

A comparatively small group of great families had managed to form itself into a sort of oligarchy and to engross all the highest offices in the State. It consisted partly of the old nobility, partly of new men who had risen to power because of their exceptional abilities. These formed a small, compact society which was intensely preoccupied with itself and its own doings. It had two strongly marked divisions, known by the new names of Whig and Tory. It contained also other groups and coteries, more or less opposed to each other, and was remarkable also for its bitter personal enmities. Yet in this disunion there was union; in all that marked out a class—tastes, habits, manners, the complete ignoring of all those on the other side of a strictly defined line—there was absolute agreement.

In matters literary this unanimity was very marked. All these fine ladies and gentlemen liked the same kind of reading. They did not care for tales of wonder and romantic adventure, as their far-off ancestors had done. They had not the eager, far-reaching curiosity of the Elizabethans, nor the intense interest in religion which had marked the Englishman from the days of Henry VIII to those of

Cromwell; they had not even the Restoration zest for dramas of love and gallantry and intrigue. A few ladies read the long French romances that had been loved by their grandmothers. The gentlemen read, or were supposed to read, the Latin classical authors, especially Horace. But the literature they really appreciated was that which was produced within their own circle and which dealt with that absorbing topic—themselves. The three things that they required in their literature were wit, polish, and personalities. Other qualities roused but a languid interest.

A great part of this literature was in verse, a style of verse which they themselves had invented and perfected, for in this polished and self-contained society the readers were, in many cases, the writers too. There were professional writers, Addison and Steele, Pope and Swift, Gay, Prior, Arbuthnot, and these were admitted into the select company, though they were scarcely of it. But also there were few gentlemen among its members who could not turn out elegant verses in praise of their friends or in abuse of their enemies, and many of the ladies were equally accomplished. Few also, gentlemen or ladies, who were of any standing or importance missed being at one time or another the subject of such verses. Sometimes these verses were bitter attacks on political enemies; almost all that Swift wrote were of this character. "To-day I published *The Fable of Midas*," he wrote to "Stella," on February 9, 1712,

> a poem printed on a loose half-sheet of paper. I know not how it will sell. But it passed wonderfully at our Society to-night, and Mr Seeley read it before me t'other night to Lord Treasurer and Lord Masham's, where they equally approved of it. Tell me how it passes with you.

The Fable of Midas was a cruel attack on the Duke of Marlborough, and the "Society" was the Scriblerus Club, to which Swift, Arbuthnot, Pope, Gay, and other prominent men of the time belonged.

Sometimes the verses were full of flattery, like Gay's to Mrs Howard:

> O wonderful creature, a woman of reason,
> Never grave out of pride, never gay out of season.

Sometimes they were really sincere and tender lyrics, like Prior's verses to Lady Margaret Harley (afterward the Duchess of Portland) when she was 5 years old, which began :

> My noble, lovely, little Peggy,
> Let this, my first Epistle, beg ye
> At dawn of morn and close of even,
> To lift your heart and hands to heaven.

Those who did not write verses, and some of those who did, wrote letters and memoirs. There is no other phase of society in all our history of which we have so complete and detailed a picture, with touches put in by so many hands. We see the members of this privileged class governing, intriguing, going into opposition ; dancing, flirting, gambling, sojourning at Bath to take the waters, and being even more modish and select there than in London ; building houses in which they took enormous pride, and trying to outdo one another in richness and variety of decoration ; laying out gardens according to the artificial and fantastic style of the period ; taking tea at Hampton Court and supping at Vauxhall ; writing at great length witty letters to tell their absent friends of all their activities ; making verses to celebrate these occupations and the hundred other trifles that filled their days.

The Court, as has been said, was not brilliant like the Court of the Restoration ; indeed, it seems to have been, under Anne and her two successors, almost insufferably dull. Manners were stiff, formal, and ungraceful. Court etiquette was rigidly enforced. A touch of the middle-class care for a respectable appearance, while it added little to the morality of this society, destroyed its power of making its vices attractive. Robert Walpole, who was Prime Minister from 1721 to 1742, and a very great man in fashionable as well as in political circles, was a country squire, coarse and careless in his appearance, his manners, and his conversation. There was plenty of wit among the company, however, and plenty of beauty and elegance. There was, besides, a foundation of good, sound common sense, and an astonishing vitality which enabled men and women to keep their hold on

life to an advanced age. A surprising number of septuagenarians and even octogenarians still managed to take their part in the pleasure and the business of their circle and to retain their taste for the literature in which that circle delighted.

Sometimes it was an event of national importance that engaged the attention of this select society, sometimes a trifling social incident. Sometimes they listened with delighted interest to pithy reflections on manners and morals, or with even keener relish to biting satires in the form of fable or allegory. But in every one of the dishes thus presented to them it was the flavour of personality, subtle or pronounced as the case might be, that pleased their specialized taste. When Addison published *The Campaign* it was the lines that glorified Marlborough rather than those which glorified the country which won him the favour of the highly placed Tories of Queen Anne's day. When Pope wrote his *Essay on Man* it was admired, not because it gave new light on man's nature and possibilities, but because it expressed tersely and clearly the fashionable ideas on religion and morality. Gay's *Beggar's Opera* made its greatest hit, as far as this highest class was concerned, by the witty, venomous representation of Walpole and Townshend in the *rôles* of rival ruffians.

Pope's *Rape of the Lock* is one of the most informing and delightful examples of the kind of literature beloved by these readers of fashion. At a pleasure party at Hampton Court Lord Petre in a frolic cut off a lock of hair from the head of the famous beauty Miss Arabella Fermor. The young lady, unfortunately, did not look upon the act as a piece of pardonable playfulness. She was furious, and so were all the members of her highly aristocratic family. Lord Petre's family upheld his side, and the matter became the talk of the town. Friends cast about for means by which the feud could be brought to an end, and John Caryll, who was intimate with both families, suggested that a poem treating the incident in a light, humorous fashion might help to make peace. Pope accordingly wrote, in mock-heroic style, a high-flown and delightful account of the whole matter, describing Belinda, the beautiful heroine, and

telling how she rose at midday and how the solemn rites of the toilet were performed. The dressing-table was the altar on which lay "puffs, powders, patches, Bibles, *billet-doux*," the maids served the priestess devoutly, and at last the great ceremony was accomplished. Then came the journey to Hampton Court by water, with charming descriptions of the brilliant company and the gay pastimes, with Belinda as the centre of attraction; and at last the fatal act, told in Pope's best style, with an airy solemnity, each ordinary detail so deftly handled and lightly placed that the delicious nonsense tickled irresistibly because it had the sound of good plain sense.

The poem was quickly circulated among the parties concerned and their friends. As a peace-offering it was a failure. The lady was disposed to look upon it as an additional affront, and was not appeased by the lavish praises it contained of her beauty and charm. The other persons concerned who had been introduced into the poem were indignant at having been, as they considered, made to look ridiculous. But outside this little circle it was received with a chorus of delighted praise. In general this fashionable society's idea of humour was inclined to be a little coarse, but the delicate trifling of *The Rape of the Lock* had a captivating quality that was irresistible; its abundance of modish detail, its grace and lightness, its wit and brilliancy and polish, were all qualities dear to the hearts of the fine ladies and gentlemen who had the good fortune to read the manuscript. The poem became the rage. Pope was tremendously elated at his success. He thought, however, that he could see a way in which his work might be improved, and so he introduced into it a whole army of elves and sprites by whom the course of events was supposed to be directed. In this new form it was published anonymously in *Lintot's Miscellany*, though all the town knew who was the author. In the first week three thousand copies were sold.

When George I succeeded Anne there were two royal Courts in the capital, for the Prince of Wales was at enmity with his father, and set up his rival establishment at Leicester House, Leicester Fields. The society that met here was

far more attractive and lively than the stolid company that gathered round the King at St James's. The Princess had a bevy of young and beautiful maids-of-honour, all of whom we know from the many verses written in their praise. There was lovely Molly Lepell, celebrated by Voltaire and Charles Churchill, and whom Gay called " Youth's youngest daughter, sweet Lepell." She married Lord Hervey, who was the Sporus of Pope's venomous attack.

> This bug with gilded wings,
> This painted child of dirt that stinks and stings ;
> Whose buzz the witty and the fair annoys,
> Yet wit ne'er tastes and beauty ne'er enjoys.

Of Molly Lepell Lord Chesterfield said, " She has all the learning that a woman should have, and more than any woman need have ; for she understands Latin perfectly well, though she wisely conceals it." In the days of George I it was considered a terrible and unnatural thing for a woman to have any learning. Lady Mary Wortley Montagu, who had a passion for knowledge, studied Latin in strict privacy, and she and the few who knew of her pursuits took incredible pains to preserve the dread secret.

Another maid-of-honour was Mary Bellenden, the " Smiling Mary, soft and fair as down," of Gay's poem. Another was Sophia Howe, the liveliest and most reckless of them all. Yet another was Mrs Howard, to whom Lord Peterborough was inspired to write the only real poem of his many verse effusions,

> I said to my heart between sleeping and waking,
> Thou wild thing that always art leaping or aching,

and of whom Pope wrote

> I knew a thing that's most uncommon,
> (Envy, be silent and attend).
> I knew a reasonable woman,
> Handsome and witty, yet a friend.

Though these ladies were the cause of so much poetic brilliancy in others, they themselves seem to have had little to do with literature in their daily lives. " We all agreed," wrote Pope, in a letter to Martha Blount,

> that the life of a Maid of Honour was of all things most miserable; and wished that every woman who envied it might have a specimen of it. To eat Westphalia ham in a morning, ride over hedges and ditches on borrowed hacks, come home in the heat of the day with a fever, and (what is a hundred times worse) with the red mark on the forehead from an uneasy hat. As soon as they can wipe off the sweat of the day, they must simper an hour in the Princess's apartment; from thence (as Shakespeare has it) to dinner with what appetite they may,—and after that till midnight, walk, work, or think, which they please.

But this was not the whole picture; there was, at least occasionally, some intellectual and witty conversation. "Let me know if they meet in the same cheerful manner to sup as formerly," wrote Molly Lepell after she had become Lady Hervey to Mrs Howard. "Are ballads or epigrams the consequences of these meetings?" The Princess Caroline herself took care to read all the new books. *Gulliver's Travels* was published at the end of October 1726, and less than three weeks from that time the Princess had nearly finished it. "I had the honour," wrote Dr Arbuthnot, the Court physician, to the Earl of Oxford, on November 16, "to wait on her Royal Highness when she had just come to that passage of the hobbling prince, which her Highness laughed at." In the same letter he says:

> I am sorry the bad weather allows your lordship so much time for study in the country, though I reckon that even in the most serene day one can hardly leave Gulliver. There has been a vast demand for Gulliver, the first impression was sold off in a moment, every one has been mightily delighted with him. . . . Ministerial folk say the book is a pleasant, humorous book, and it was a pity he descended so low, as some little satire that is too particular; some folks that I know went immediately to their maps to look for Lilliput, and reckoned it a fault in their maps not to have it set down. . . . In short the book has made very good diversion to all the town.

All through the reign of George I these readers of fashion continued to cultivate their own exclusive taste in literature, but in the third decade of the century the difference between the books read by the upper and the books read by the middle class became gradually less marked, until the rising popularity of the novel brought the whole reading public into agreement.

CHAPTER XXVI

THE CITIZEN THEATRE

BELOW the very select company that constituted the readers of fashion came the large and still growing middle class, which had extended itself enormously, both upward and downward, during the years that had passed since the Revolution of 1688. Many of the noble families that had lived with reckless extravagance at the Court of Charles II had found themselves, at his death, in bad case. Some had taken to a trade or profession; some had married rich City heiresses; some had retired to their estates and become small country squires; and all these now formed an upper section of the middle class. At the same time, the townsmen had increased in riches and importance, and had improved their education and their manners. Not only the great merchants, who had always been notable figures in the national life, but also the lesser folk, the small merchants and tradespeople, were, when Queen Anne came to the throne, people of acknowledged standing and consequence.

The theatre was no longer the exclusive resort of an aristocratic society. The members of the new ruling class, though they came often to the theatre, did not look upon a performance as a brilliant social function. They spent much of their time in one another's drawing-rooms, and in places of public amusement, such as Ranelagh and Vauxhall. There was room, therefore, for those of the new middle class who aspired to be fashionable, and these came now to the theatre in large numbers. The nobility, somewhat disdainful of sharing their amusements with the citizens, became less and less frequent in their attendance, and this went on until the greater part of the theatre was habitually filled by the townsfolk.

The plays that were put upon the stage for their delecta-

tion were, for the most part, the same as those which had been played before the audiences of the Restoration. The sparkling comedies of Dryden, Wycherley, Congreve, and their company alternated with the plays of the Elizabethans. But these were ill-suited to the taste and understanding of the new patrons of the theatre, who were disgusted by the immorality of the later comedies and puzzled by their wit. The earlier plays made too great a demand upon their imagination, which was feeble, and appealed to their deeper emotions in a way that they found disturbing and uncomfortable. These prosperous citizens came to the theatre mainly for diversion. They were not willing, as the Elizabethans had been, to accept the drama as an experience, in which for a short space the audience tasted all the pains and passions, the raptures and the dreams, of which mortals are capable. They loved the familiar better than the strange, and sentiment better than emotion.

Managers of theatres soon realized that a new style of play was wanted. The difficulty was to find something that would please both classes in the audience, the nobility and the citizens. Various experiments were made. Classical tragedy was revived, with a fair amount of success, but the only really notable example of this type of play was the *Cato* of Addison, produced on April 14, 1713. It was a time of great political excitement, for Queen Anne's health was obviously failing, and every one in the country was concerned as to who should be her successor. The stand of Cato against Cæsar appealed to popular feeling and aroused immense enthusiasm. Only eleven days before the news that the Treaty of Utrecht had been signed had reached London, and the Tory party had triumphed. Pope wrote to Sir William Trumbull that

> the numerous and violent party claps of the Whig party on the one hand were echoed back by the Tories on the other. . . . And after all the applauses of the opposite faction, Lord Bolingbroke sent for Booth, who played Cato, into his box, and presented him with fifty guineas in acknowledgement, as he expressed it, for defending the cause of liberty so well against a perpetual dictator.

Cato ran for a month in London, and was produced afterward at Oxford. "The town is so fond of it," said Lady Mary Wortley Montagu, "that the orange wenches and fruit-women in the park offer the books at the side of the coaches, and the prologue and epilogue are hawked about the streets by the common hawkers."

To please the citizen element in the audience plays of a domestic character, with an abundance of sentiment, a touching love-story, and an ending in which virtue was always triumphant and vice suitably punished, were produced. In the production of plays of this type Richard Steele led the way. He had, as we have seen, a strong missionary zeal, and was eager to reform the manners and morals of his countrymen; and, before the idea of *The Tatler* came to him, he attempted to do this by means of his comedies. They are not great works; modern taste has found them feeble and sometimes ridiculous, but they delighted the audiences of the London theatres in the first half of the eighteenth century. Other writers followed where Steele led, and sentimental comedy became the rage.

We will look in at Drury Lane Theatre on an evening of 1722, for the performances, following the changed dinner-hour, now began at seven o'clock. It is a much larger theatre than either the Globe or the Duke's Playhouse, but it is quite full, for a new play of Steele's, *The Conscious Lovers*, is to be produced.

The Prologue tells the audience that the aim of the play is "To please by wit that scorns the aid of vice," and goes on:

> 'Tis yours with breeding to refine the age,
> To chasten wit and moralize the stage, . . .
> Redeem from long contempt the comic name
> And judge politely for your country's fame.

The plot of the play is simple. Sir John Bevil has arranged a marriage between his son John and Lucinda, the daughter of his old friend, the wealthy merchant Sealham. The son falls in love with Indiana, a lady whom he has met accidentally and rescued from a distressing situation. Lucinda is in love with Myrtle, John's friend. Misunderstandings occur, and the two young men are on the verge of fighting

a duel. Steele makes this an opportunity to express in very strong terms his reprobation of the practice of duelling. In the end Indiana is discovered to be the long-lost daughter of Sealham by his first wife, and all ends happily. There are some very pretty love-scenes between Tom, servant to John Bevil, and Phillis, Lucinda's maid, in one of which Tom describes how he fell in love with Phillis when she was cleaning the inside of her mistress's windows and he was cleaning the outside. One of the speeches put into the mouth of Sealham, describing the position of the merchant of the day, found much favour with the audience :

> Sir, as much of a cit as you take me for I know the town and the world. Give me leave to say that we merchants are a species of gentry that have grown into the world the last century, and are as honourable and almost as useful as you landed folks that have always thought yourselves so much above us ; for your trading, forsooth, is extended no farther than a load of hay or a fat ox. You are pleasant people indeed ! because you are generally bred up to be lazy therefore warrant you industry is dishonourable.

The play was excellently acted, and was favourably, though scarcely enthusiastically, received. It ran for twenty-six nights, and was several times reproduced during the next few years.

All through the reign of George I the sentimental comedy held the stage. Season after season the theatres were filled with large audiences who followed the fortunes of greatly tried heroes and heroines with sympathetic smiles and sighs and immense satisfaction ; and went home complacently discussing the obvious and edifying moral. But at length there came signs that the public were becoming a little tired of so much sentimentality. The younger and more lively part of the audience in particular made it evident that they required more variety and entertainment. The managers of the theatres did their best. They introduced pantomime and singing into the plays ; they brought about all sorts of surprising and spectacular effects by the use of new and complicated stage-machinery. All these things the audiences received with favour, but they did not fully satisfy the demand for novelty.

Then, in 1728, John Rich, the manager of the Lincoln's Inn Theatre, announced a ballad-opera of an entirely new type, called by the intriguing title of *The Beggar's Opera*; and on January 29, the night of its production, all the town flocked to see it.

They found that it was indeed something quite new. The hero was a highwayman, the rest of the characters were thieves, beggars, and other disreputable persons belonging to a class of society with which the fine ladies and gentlemen and the respectable citizen alike would acknowledge no fellowship or acquaintance. But it was all so gay and irresponsible, the airs were so tuneful, the fun so rollicking, the setting so novel; the hero was so gallant and impudent, the heroine so lovely and loving, and the whole thing went with such a zest and swing that the audience soon forgot its shocked disapproval of the low company into which it had been brought. Added to all its other attractions the play had a daring and flagrant satire on the two leading statesmen of the day, Walpole and Townshend, who, as was clear to every member of the enraptured audience, were represented by the two equally odious characters of Peachum and Lockit. Walpole, who was present in the theatre, led the applause.

The Beggar's Opera was a triumphant success. It was played every night for a month, which in those days was considered a truly marvellous run for any play, and was acted altogether on sixty-two nights during the season. It was taken to the provinces, for almost every town of any size had now its theatre, and even villages had halls where strolling companies gave frequent performances. James Woodforde, the curate of Castle Cary, recorded in his diary that he saw *The Beggar's Opera* at the Court House of Castle Cary in Somerset in May 1770. As the town laughingly said, the play had made Gay rich and Rich gay.

Ballad-opera became the fashion. Other writers hastened to imitate so profitable an example, and though no work was produced that had as great a success as Gay's masterpiece most of the productions drew good audiences during the next ten to fifteen years.

Three years after *The Beggar's Opera* came another play,

SCENE FROM "THE BEGGAR'S OPERA"

Hogarth

Photo Mansell

equally novel and equally successful. In the summer of 1731, the season when interest in the theatre naturally languished, and new productions were not looked for, the town was surprised one day to see in the newspapers notices of a new play, entitled *The Merchant; or The True History of George Barnwell*, to be produced at Drury Lane Theatre. People talked and wondered, and by and by somebody made the discovery that the play was founded on an old ballad, which told how an apprentice named George Barnwell had fallen into evil company, had robbed his master, and, going on from bad to worse, had murdered his rich uncle, for which crime he had been hanged at Tyburn.

The town was somewhat affronted that the manager should expect persons of position and respectability to take an interest in such a play. *The Beggar's Opera* was one thing—a joke, an absurdity which was accepted for its gaiety, its extravagance, and its entrancing music. Moreover, a highwayman was more romantic than an apprentice, and Macheath was not actually hanged, though he came very near that fate. But to expect the best society to be seriously concerned in the fortunes of a 'prentice-lad was to insult that worthy and distinguished company. So everybody said, with emphasis ; yet there was something in the novelty of the idea which, in spite of their sense of their own dignity, intrigued them strongly. The old ballad of *George Barnwell* was fairly well known among the vulgar ; it was now introduced to the notice of the higher classes by an enterprising printer, who caused a number of copies to be hastily struck off. The wild young men of the town, who generally made themselves conspicuous on first nights, resolved on a frolic. They bought copies of the ballad, and went in force to the theatre, with their minds made up to destroy the new play by their ridicule.

The house was crowded, although it might have been expected that on that sultry June night the town would have found some pleasanter place in which to amuse itself than a close-packed theatre. There were many distinguished people in the house, and among them a little sickly-looking, slightly deformed man, who sat near the stage, and followed

the play with close attention. This was the great Mr Pope, who had come up from his villa at Twickenham, attracted, like the rest of the world, by curiosity to see what could be made of such unpromising material as the story of George Barnwell.

The first scenes showed George Barnwell's fellow-apprentice, Trueman, the merchant Thorowgood, in whose service they were, and the merchant's daughter, Maria. The audience gathered from the conversation that the merchant was as estimable as his name suggested, that his beautiful daughter was loved by the two apprentices, and that both of these had their feet set upon the road that leads to honour and fortune. The next scene showed the temptress, one Millwood, a woman of the town, talking with her maid, Lucy. She had observed Barnwell—" innocent, handsome, and about eighteen "—in the City, and had noted that he was dealing with large sums of money. She had made an excuse to speak to him, and had asked him to visit her. Even as she told Lucy this the boy knocked at the door. From that moment he left the road of honour for the path to ruin. He fell, of course, deeply in love with the false charmer, who led him to lower and lower depths of wickedness. Artfully incited by her, he robbed his master, falsified his accounts, and finally, desperate for money with which to satisfy his rapacious and adored temptress, he waylaid and murdered his rich uncle. He was then heartlessly betrayed and given over to justice by the woman for whom he had sinned, who by this means secured her own safety ; and after an affecting farewell scene with Thorowgood, Trueman, and Maria—to whom too late the unfortunate lad's affections returned—the end of the play came, and left George Barnwell in his dungeon, awaiting the carrying out of the death-sentence which had been passed upon him.

At first there was a great deal of laughing and joking among the audience, and copies of the old ballad were waved ostentatiously, as their owners loudly declaimed the verses which bore on the action on the stage. But after the first scene the noise lessened, then ceased altogether. The audience, in spite of itself, was interested. All eyes were

fixed on the stage, all ears were strained so that no word might be lost. The ballads fell from inattentive hands. Handkerchiefs began to appear, for tears were streaming so freely down many faces that it was impossible any longer to ignore them, or to brush them away unnoticed. Men and women alike wept openly and freely. When the play was over the triumphant manager knew that his bold venture had been a success.

George Barnwell; or The London Merchant, as the play was subsequently called, ran for twenty nights, and was revived again and again, always drawing crowded houses. The actors in the original cast were not of any exceptional merit, but later, when the play was produced at Covent Garden, Charles Kemble took the part of George Barnwell. The actor was at this time no older than the hero of the play, and completely fitted the description, "innocent, handsome, and about eighteen." He acted with a pathos and simplicity that overcame not only the citizen class, but also the fine ladies and gentlemen, who felt it a little beneath their dignity to surrender themselves to the attractions of so humble a hero.

A series of domestic tragedies, all highly moral and sentimental, succeeded *George Barnwell.* Season after season the eighteenth-century audiences wept freely over the sorrows of low-born heroes and heroines, saw them tempted, fallen, miserable, and penitent. Only occasionally were they granted a happy ending; usually the play ended on a note of the utmost pathos, and left the audience sobbing and wiping their eyes, convinced, at least for the moment, that honesty and morality really were the best policy.

When the Londoners were tired of weeping they went for a change to the Little Theatre in the Haymarket, where Samuel Foote, the great comic actor and mimic, was producing farces, many of them written by himself. He caricatured all his fellow-actors and all the public characters of the day, and delighted the town with his drolleries. Evelina, the beautiful and high-born heroine of Miss Burney's novel, went to see him act in *The Minor* and *The Commissary* when she came on a visit to London in 1778, and was

" extremely entertained." But her highest praises she reserved for performances of a very different sort. She wrote to her guardian, Mr Villars, in enthusiastic praise of the great David Garrick, about whom all London was raving. We will try in a following chapter to see something of the theatre in the later part of the eighteenth century through her eyes.

CHAPTER XXVII

EVELINA AT THE PLAY

THIS chapter is written in the form of letters from the heroine of Fanny Burney's novel *Evelina* to her guardian, Mr Villars. They contain several passages from the novel, and material from it and from Fanny's *Early Diary*. Evelina is paying a visit to London in the charge of a friend, Mrs Mirvan. Captain Mirvan, the husband of Mrs Mirvan, is rough and ill-mannered, but both his wife and his daughter are well-bred and charming. Lord Orville is the nobleman whom Evelina ultimately marries. Sir Clement Willoughby is an unprincipled man of fashion who persecutes her with his attentions.

Evelina to the Reverend Mr Villars, April 1778

At last, my dearest sir, I have a long morning that I can give to my pen, and I hasten to atone for my seeming neglect in writing to you. I have, indeed, a vast deal to tell you of our diversions during the past few days. No evening here in town passes without its party of pleasure.

We have been twice to the theatre, for Captain Mirvan, although he despises most entertainments, has a partiality for a good play. On Saturday evening we went to Drury Lane. Our places were in the front row of a side box, and almost as soon as we were seated Sir Clement Willoughby and Lord Orville joined us.

The play was Congreve's *Love for Love*; and though it is fraught with wit and entertainment I hope I shall never see it represented again; for it is so extremely indelicate—to use the softest word I can—that Miss Mirvan and I were perpetually out of countenance and could neither make any observations ourselves nor listen to those of others.

When the play was over I flattered myself that I should be able to look about me with less restraint as we intended to stay the farce; but the curtain had hardly dropped when the box door opened, and in came Mr Lovel, the man by whose foppery and impertinence I was so much teased at the ball, as I told you in my last letter. He addressed me now with the same effrontery,

and though I endeavoured to show my displeasure by my manner he persisted, till a remark from Captain Mirvan drew his attention. There had been some discussion on the merits of the play, which was a favourite with the Captain, chiefly, I believe, because it contains a character named Ben Legend, a coarse, ruffianly seaman.

" I'll maintain," said the Captain, " it's one of the best comedies in our language, and has more wit in one scene than all the new plays put together."

" For my part," said Mr Lovel, " I confess I seldom listen to the players ; one has so much to do in looking about, and finding out one's acquaintance, that really one has no time to mind the stage. Pray," most affectedly fixing his eyes on a diamond ring on his little finger, " pray, what was the play to-night ? "

" Why," cried the Captain, " do you come to the play without knowing what it is ? "

" Oh, yes, sir, yes, very frequently ; I have no time to read play-bills ; one merely comes to meet one's friends, and show that one's alive."

" Ha, ha, ha ! and so," cried the Captain, " it costs you five shillings a night to show you're alive ! Well, faith, my friends should all think me dead and under ground before I'd be at that expense for 'em. And so you've been here all this time and don't know what the play is ! "

" Why, really, sir, a play requires so much attention—it is scarcely possible to keep awake if one listens ; for, indeed, by the time it is evening one has been so fatigued with dining—or wine—or the house—or studying—that it is—it is perfectly an impossibility. But, now I think of it, I believe I have a bill in my pocket ; oh, ay, here it is—*Love for Love*, ay—true, ha, ha ! —how could I be so stupid ? "

" Oh, easily enough, as to that, I warrant you," said the Captain, " but, by my soul, this is one of the best jokes I ever heard ! Come to a play and not know what it is ! "

Mr Lovel was somewhat put out of countenance by this raillery, though he attempted a retort in his usual conceited manner, and the two wrangled until the curtain went up for the farce. Then Mr Lovel, finding we chose to attend to the players, left the box.

The entertainment was *The Deuce is in Him*, by Colman the elder, which Lord Orville observed to be the most finished and elegant *petite pièce* that was ever written in English. We were especially entertained by the drollery of Mr King, who took the part of Prattle, a chattering attorney.

On Monday we are to go again to the theatre, to see the wonderful, the admirable Mr Garrick play *Richard III*. In the first letter I wrote you from town I told you we had seen him in

the character of Ranger in Hoadley's delightful comedy, *The Suspicious Husband*, and in what a rapture I was returned. The fire, the animation, the ease, the grace of his performance put me in an ecstasy, and I would have given the world to have had the whole play acted over again. All here tell me that his Richard III is even finer. How I long for Monday! Adieu, dear and honoured sir.

Tuesday. We came home so late last evening that I dared not begin to write, though I longed to pour out to you some of the rapture and terror that filled my soul. To-day I am calmer, and I will try to recount from the beginning this memorable, this wonderful experience.

Captain Mirvan declined making one of our party, for he said he had seen *Richard III* acted once, and would not spend five shillings to see for a second time a play which had ne'er a laugh in it from beginning to end. His place was taken by Mr Horton, an old friend of Mrs Mirvan's, whose white hair and benevolent countenance brought to your fond Evelina memories of her revered friend at Berry Hill. Mr Horton comes every year to London, and has witnessed all the most important plays that have been produced there for the past thirty years. As we drove to the theatre in a hackney coach Mrs Mirvan, my sweet Maria, and myself listened entranced while he told us how Garrick, at the beginning of his career, had played Richard III at an illicit theatre in Goodman's Fields, and how all the town had come flocking to see him, so that there was a line of carriages from Temple Bar to Whitechapel. And indeed I do not wonder that it should have been so, for such a truly grand and terrible performance has surely never been given by any other man.

The theatre was packed, and we saw in different parts of the house many of our acquaintances. Lord Orville and Sir Clement again honoured us by coming to our box and behaving with the most distinguishing politeness; but Mr Lovel, I rejoiced to notice, affected not to see us. When the play began, however, I had no thought but for Mr Garrick. He was sublimely horrible. Good Heavens! how he made me shudder whenever he appeared! It is inconceivable how terribly great he is in this character. He seemed so truly the monster he performed that I felt myself glow with indignation every time I saw him. The applause he met with exceeds all belief of the absent. I thought at the end they would have torn the house down. Our seats shook under us.

To-day we are all somewhat disordered and languid with the excess of emotion through which we have passed. Forgive, therefore, your devoted Evelina if her letter be briefer and duller than her duty to you should make it. I will write more in a day or two. Adieu, my dearest sir.

Friday. Since I last wrote to you we have paid yet another visit to the theatre. Last week the papers announced that on Wednesday there would be produced at Covent Garden a new and original comedy entitled *The Rivals*. The author was not named, but is commonly said to be a Mr Sheridan, a handsome and witty young Irishman, only twenty-four years of age. He has lately made a runaway match with the beautiful Miss Linley of Bath, which has caused much stir in the town. Every one, therefore, was interested in the new play, which, it was rumoured, was in somewhat the same style as Goldsmith's *She Stoops to Conquer*, but even more humorous and entertaining. Captain Mirvan at once determined to see it, and by great good fortune he was enabled to obtain a box for the opening night.

Covent Garden is a smaller theatre than Drury Lane, but presents exactly similar features. The audience assembled there might have been the same as that which witnessed *Richard III*, except that it included an even larger number of people of rank. The galleries were as usual filled with the lackeys of the great ladies and gentlemen below, who, as the play proceeded, made their presence evident by unmannerly noises. Captain Mirvan had invited Sir Clement Willoughby to form one of our party, and as he sat next to me in the box my enjoyment of the play was disturbed by his provoking and ill-timed compliments. Lord Orville bowed to us with obliging politeness from a neighbouring box, but his salute received such scant and cold acknowledgement from the Captain and Sir Clement that he forbore his accustomed visit to us. This, added to my displeasure at Sir Clement's behaviour towards me, put me into an uncomfortable humour ill-suited to the enjoyment of Mr Sheridan's comedy. It is indeed witty and amusing, and the characters have life and animation ; but it was badly acted, although the cast included the celebrated Quick and others of almost equal reputation.

Captain Mirvan applauded loudly the first scene of the play, which showed a romantic, love-sick young lady—ungracefully acted by Miss Barsanti—reading the novels and poems against which he himself never tires of inveighing. Her name was Lydia Languish, and she had an aunt, Mrs Malaprop, who curiously mispronounced every word of any length that she attempted to utter. All this gave the Captain great satisfaction, and he approved also of Sir Anthony Absolute, the irate father of the lover of Lydia Languish, though this actor played very ill, and at times came to a stop and had to be prompted from the wings. The later scenes did not please him so well, there was too much palaver and megrims, he said, fit only for plaguy girls. He was delighted, however, with the blustering Irishman, Sir Lucius O'Trigger, who, to his great enjoyment, played on

poor Mrs Malaprop a trick almost as gross as he himself might have practised on Madame Duval.

The performance was frequently interrupted by loud hissings and catcallings from some parts of the house and by applause no less vociferous from other parts. The contention grew at last so violent that the manager caused a number of such members of the audience as persisted in shouting down the play to be ejected, and the performance proceeded in comparative tranquillity.

The journals next morning said little in favour of the new play. They complained of its insufferable tediousness and professed themselves shocked at its lack of polish and politeness. For my part I admired its wit and humour. 'Tis true there was nothing in it to touch the emotions, or call forth the tears of sensibility, but, as Mrs Mirvan remarked, there was nothing that could call up a blush to the cheek of the most delicate female.

Last evening *The Rivals* was acted again, and again there was a mixture of hisses and applause. It is now, so the morning journals announce, to be withdrawn in order that the author may make certain alterations, and will be produced again after a few weeks. But before that time comes your happy Evelina will have returned to the quiet retirement of Berry Hill, and for her plays and playgoing will have become things of the past. Adieu, revered and beloved sir, till then.

CHAPTER XXVIII

THE NOVEL-READERS

IN the year 1741 there stood in the busy thoroughfare of High Holborn a well-stocked, prosperous-looking silversmith's shop. The silversmith, whose name was Matthew Stradling, lived with his family in the rooms above, according to the good and thrifty custom of his day. His wife, who was the daughter of a country parson, had received more education than was commonly given to girls at that time, and had brought her husband a small store of books. His eldest son was by way of being a man of fashion, was foppish in his dress, and loved the theatre and the coffee-houses, where the beaux congregated; yet he was a good lad, industrious in his working hours, and with the making of a shrewd man of business. His daughter Charlotte, seventeen years old, was bright-eyed and fresh and merry as any country lass, though she had never been out of London, except on Sunday afternoon outings to the pleasant villages of Islington and Chelsea. She loved reading, and had read all the books in the bookcase in the parlour, some of them many times over. Yet it was a good store for a tradesman of those days. Two shelves were filled with the old romances. There were ten volumes of *Le Grand Cyrus* and twelve of *Clélie*, and *Cléopâtre* and *Parthenissa*, all thumbed and well worn, for they had been read by Mistress Stradling and her mother before her. Charlotte loved these long-winded novels, though they were now out of fashion and despised by the great ladies of the day. She had wept more tears over the sorrows of Artemise and Prazimene and Doralize than over any real trials that had come to her in her own life.

On the next shelf stood Milton's *Paradise Lost*, Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe*, Foxe's *Book of Martyrs*, and Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress*. All these Mistress Stradling had brought

from her father's parsonage. Her husband's contribution to the store at the time of their marriage had been the bound volumes of *The Tatler* and *The Spectator* and a small collection of tattered, paper-bound copies of plays—Steele's *The Tender Husband* and *The Conscious Lovers*, Addison's *Cato*, Dryden's *The Wild Gallant*, and a few others. There were some newer volumes, which he had been coaxed into buying by the pretty daughter who was the apple of his eye —*Gulliver's Travels*, Mr Pope's poems, Mr Gay's *Fables*, and the *Zara* of Aaron Hill, who was an old acquaintance of the silversmith's. The books of devotion—the Bibles and prayer-books belonging to the various members of the family, with Law's *Serious Call*, Jeremy Taylor's *Holy Living* and *Holy Dying*, Baxter's *Saints' Everlasting Rest*, and *The Whole Duty of Man*—were reverently placed by themselves on a small table in the corner of the room.

All these Charlotte had read and reread, and still she sighed for more. Her father knew that no gift would be received with such rapturous thanks as the gift of a book, and therefore, when he called one January morning at the bookseller's shop in Russell Street for his *Gentleman's Magazine* he kept his eyes open for any volume that might please her. As it happened, the bookseller seemed that morning more eager to talk about his wares than about those public matters which were usually the subject of a morning gossip.

" Have you seen the new book, wrote by Samuel Richardson, the printer you know of, whose office is in Salisbury Square ? " he asked. " All London is talking of it, and I am selling a prodigious number of copies."

He took up two small, thick volumes, and handed one of them to the silversmith.

" It is called *Pamela ; or Virtue Rewarded*," he said, " and as far as I can see, for I have not had time to read it myself, it is made entirely of letters written by a serving-maid to her father and mother. It seems a strange sort of book for ladies and gentlemen to delight in reading, but there is scarce one among the great folk who does not praise it highly. Mr Pope says that it will do more good than many volumes of sermons."

The silversmith opened the volume and glanced through the first pages. This Pamela seemed to be a pretty little maid, who wrote dutifully to her father, minded her work, and obeyed her mistress. He doubted if it would please his romance-loving Charlotte, who delighted to read of knights and ladies of high degree and all their wonderful adventures and faithful loves. Then his eye caught a passage that made him smile. " I bought of a Pedlar," the heroine wrote,

> two pretty enough round ear'd Caps, a little Straw Hat, and a Pair of knit Mittens turn'd up with white Calicoe ; and two Pair of ordinary blue Worsted Hose, that make a Smartish Appearance, with white Clocks, I'll assure you ; and two yards of black Ribbon for my Shift Sleeves ; and to serve as a Necklace ; and when I had 'em all come home, I went and look'd upon them once in two Hours for two Days together.

This sort of thing, he thought, might amuse Charlotte, who herself loved such clothes as " make a Smartish Appearance." At any rate, it seemed a harmless sort of book, and he would buy it. He took it home, and Charlotte received it with rapture ; and when he went out the next morning he left her at her daily task of sewing, her needle flying more swiftly than usual that she might the sooner come to her new book, her eyes shining more brightly, and her chatter sounding more gaily.

Business detained him all day, and when he took his place at the supper-table he looked smilingly at his daughter. But her bright face was clouded, her eyes were red with crying, and she sat silent and mournful all through the meal. He was about to ask what was the matter when his wife gave him a warning look ; and after Charlotte had said a subdued good-night and gone off to bed she turned to him, saying,

" 'Tis the book you brought her yesterday. I found her sobbing over it in the parlour, just as I remember sobbing over *Cléopâtre.*"

The good lady spoke complacently, as approving such delicate sensibility, but the silversmith was inclined to be annoyed. He had not bought the book that his house might be made doleful by red eyes and tearful sighings. His annoyance grew when next day things were no better. He

ILLUSTRATION TO "PAMELA"

"Mr B. finds Pamela writing."

Joseph Highmore

National Gallery

almost made a vow that he would bring home no more books. Then on the third day came a change. At supper that night Charlotte was full of laughter and high spirits. The book was finished, the heroine had come through her trials, had married her master and become a great lady. Charlotte would have told him all about it, but her mother checked her.

" I am reading the book," she said, " and would not know the ending until I come to it in due course."

The silversmith, looking up in some surprise, saw that his wife's eyes were almost as red as Charlotte's had been, though she was making an attempt at cheerfulness. He sighed as he rose from the table. That plaguy book !

Sunday came, and the family went decorously to church at St Bride's, in Fleet Street ; and here, at sermon-time, another surprise awaited Matthew Stradling. Here was the parson recommending his congregation to read and study *Pamela*, from which, he said, they might learn priceless lessons of morality and seemly behaviour, and might see how God rewarded those who trod in the way of righteousness. The silversmith began to think more respectfully of a book thus recommended. At dinner-time *Pamela* was discussed. Mistress Stradling had now finished it, and her cheerfulness was restored. Matthew the younger reported that all the ladies who wished to be in the fashion brought their copies to routs and masquerades, and held them up to show them to one another. " 'Tis deemed a disgrace," said Matthew, " not to have read Mr Richardson's book."

The silversmith felt his curiosity quicken as he listened, and when he was settled a little later in his comfortable chair by the fire he took up the first volume and began to read. At first he thought it only a simple tale, fitted to please women, but as he went on the story gripped him, and to his astonishment he found his own eyes wet. He shut the book and took up *The Gentleman's Magazine*, and turning over the pages he came to this notice :

> Several Encomiums on a Series of Familiar Letters, publish'd but last Month, entitled *Pamela ; or Virtue Rewarded*, came too late for this Magazine, and we believe there will be little Occasion

> for inserting them in our next; because a Second Edition will then come out to supply the Demands in the Country, it being judged in Town as great a Sign of Want of Curiosity not to have read *Pamela* as not to have seen the French and Italian Dancers.

He put the paper down. That plaguy book again! He could not get away from it.

But he went on with *Pamela*, and read through the three volumes during the week. As he went on he felt less and less sympathy with the heroine, and was more and more inclined to regard her as an artful baggage who drew back simply to make her master more eager in pursuit. He could scarcely bear to think that his little Charlotte had read some of the passages, which seemed to him unfit for the eyes of any modest maiden. Yet all around him he heard the book so highly praised and its morality so much extolled that he began to distrust his own judgment.

Some months later he went one evening to the Rainbow Coffee-house, in Fleet Street, which he seldom visited, and there he saw his old acquaintance Aaron Hill. The two greeted one another warmly, for since Hill had removed from London to Plaistow they had met but seldom. The silversmith listened while Hill talked. He was, as usual, full of enthusiasm for the latest of his many projects—the cultivation of a vineyard at Plaistow with a view to the manufacture of English wines. After a time he mentioned Mr Richardson as being interested in his scheme, and then Matthew Stradling remembered that Hill was an intimate friend of the author of *Pamela*. He asked him what he thought of the book.

Hill was fervent in its praises. "Who would have dreamed," he said, "that he should find under the modest disguise of a novel all the soul of religion, good breeding, discretion, good nature, wit, fancy, fine thought, morality? I have done nothing but read it to others, and hear others again read it to me, ever since it came into my hands; and I find I am likely to do nothing else."

"Ah!" said the silversmith, doubtfully. "Richardson is your friend; your esteem for him inclines you to admire his work."

"Not only I," exclaimed the other, "but every one admires it. All over the town the same things are being said. I have been told that Mr Chetwynd, the friend of the great Dean Swift, has declared that if all other books were burnt the Bible and *Pamela* should be preserved. Do you know that there have been four editions of the book since it was first published last November?"

"And do you really think," asked Matthew Stradling, coming to the point that troubled him, "that it is a book you would wish your daughters to read?"

Aaron Hill looked at him in astonishment. "I know of no book fitter for the reading of virtuous young women," he declared emphatically. "Mr Richardson himself sent my daughters a copy of *Pamela*, and I rejoiced to see them perusing it. He sent, too, an interleaved copy, desiring them to render Pamela more worthy of their approbation by correcting her; but I told him we would not scratch such a beautiful face for the Indies, and my daughters filled up the blank pages with observations on the good they had derived from his heroine's conversation."

"Well," said the silversmith stoutly, "had I but read it first the book should never have come into my Charlotte's hands."

"It is true," admitted Hill, "that Dr Isaac Watts is somewhat of your opinion. Mr Richardson was much hurt by an expression he used in a letter acknowledging the copy sent to him. 'The ladies complain,' he said, 'that they cannot read it without blushing.' But elsewhere high and low approve it. Why, at Slough the blacksmith, having procured a copy, read it aloud to the villagers who gathered round his fire to hear it, and when the book was finished and Pamela married they were so transported that nothing could stop them from going to the church and ringing a joyous peal upon the bells."

The silversmith was somewhat impressed by this story; yet he still maintained that the book was not fit reading for modest maidens, and held his own stoutly in the argument that followed.

"Well, well," said Aaron Hill at length, rising to say

good-night, " I will send my daughters to visit Miss Charlotte, and they shall tell her what they think of the book and of the great privilege they have enjoyed in meeting its estimable author."

It was not, however, until near the end of the year that the two young ladies paid their promised visit. Matthew found them in the parlour when he came home one afternoon early in December. They were fine, bright-eyed, lively girls, and their names were Minerva and Astræa. They were as full of enthusiasm for dear Mr Richardson as their father had been. They poured out accounts of the visits they had paid to him at his house at North End, Hammersmith, and of the company of ladies and gentlemen they had met there—all of whom adored Mr Richardson and doted on *Pamela*. They were all of them, too, terribly indignant at the imitations and travesties of the work that had been published by scoffing and envious detractors.

" There have been sixteen of them in all," declared Astræa, " and every one meant to ridicule Mr Richardson's great work. I have not read them," she hastened to add, " but so many people have told me of them. Mr Richardson has been obliged himself to write a sequel to the book, to displace the other mock sequels which have been published. It is called *Pamela Married*. Have you read it ? " she asked Charlotte.

" No," answered Charlotte, and looked beseechingly at her father, who would not meet her eye.

" I will lend you my copy," promised Astræa, and in a whirl of enthusiasm and praises and promises to come again the two young ladies departed.

Matthew Stradling took care to look through *Pamela Married* at the bookshop, and he liked it as little as he had liked its forerunner. But he enjoyed some of the passages in the parodies of the work, of which new ones appeared from time to time. One of these, called *Joseph Andrews*, which purported to be the history of Pamela's brother, so took his fancy that he bought it for his own private reading. This was early in 1742. He finished the book in a week, in the after-supper hour when Charlotte had gone to bed, with many chuckles and delighted exclamations, so that his wife's

curiosity was aroused. But when she heard that it was another attack on *Pamela* she was very indignant, and refused to listen to any more, though her husband assured her that after the first few chapters the author had forgotten all about Richardson's book and had gone on to tell a prodigiously entertaining story in his own way. Matthew was not, however, anxious that his family should read the book, for though its vigorous style and its lifelike characters—Parson Adams, Mrs Slipslop, and the rest—delighted him he decided that its humour was too broad and its pictures of life too coarsely realistic for the reading of refined females. So he did not put it in the bookcase with the other books, and he discussed it only with his fellow-citizens at his club or at the bookshop.

But his wife and daughter soon heard all about the book from the Misses Hill, who paid them another visit, and described in moving terms the indignation it had excited among dear Mr Richardson's circle of lady-admirers, which included the four sisters of Henry Fielding, the author of the scandalous *Joseph Andrews*. These ladies were desperately wounded by the conduct of their brother, who was already well known as a playwright, though he had never before attempted a novel. Miss Sarah Fielding, who was herself engaged on a novel which was to be called *David Simple*, was specially unhappy, fearing that Mr Richardson might, not unnaturally, be disposed to withdraw the countenance and assistance he might otherwise have given her.

" But speaking of new novels," said Miss Minerva, with a lightening of her severe countenance, and a mysterious lowering of her voice, " I have a secret to tell you, which you must not breathe to a single person."

The heads drew together. Charlotte felt a thrill of almost fearful delight as she listened.

" Mr Richardson is writing another book. Its heroine's name is Clarissa. She is not a serving-maid like Pamela, but a lady of birth and fortune, and so beautiful and virtuous that every one must love her. Mr Richardson has written to my father and told him about it, and promises soon to send the manuscript of the first volume."

Here was great news. Another story, which was to surpass even *Pamela*! Charlotte hoped fervently that it would soon be finished. She felt that she could hardly wait for the happy day which would put it into her hands.

But she had to wait so long that she almost forgot all about the promised delight. Year after year slipped by while the new book was growing to prodigious dimensions under its author's hands. *David Simple* appeared, and Charlotte read it and praised it with enthusiasm, but it was not, she owned, equal to *Pamela*. When at last the first two volumes of *Clarissa* were published in 1747 pretty Charlotte was married, and was living above her husband's hosier's shop in Cheapside.

Her husband at her entreaty at once procured the new book, and bore with patience the floods of tears, the sobs and sighs and lamentations, that it brought; indeed, when he in turn read it he joined his grief to hers. For the trials of Pamela Andrews were as nothing compared to the trials of Clarissa Harlowe; and the real pathos and beauty of the story rose high above those of the former book.

Once more the whole town was profoundly moved, and everybody talked of the lovely and injured Clarissa. Two more volumes were published in April 1748, and the emotion rose higher. Each chapter, while it brought the heroine into even more heartrending situations, showed more clearly the purity and beauty of her character. Somehow a report had got about that the story was to end tragically, and many of Mr Richardson's lady-readers grew almost hysterical. He was besieged with letters entreating him to rescue Clarissa and bring her to happiness. "How have I suffered," wrote the author,

> from the Cavils of some, from the Prayers of others, from the entreaties of many more, to make what is called a Happy Ending! Mr Lyttelton, the late Mr Thomson, Mr Cibber, and Mr Fielding have been among these.

Mr Lyttelton was a famous political writer of the day, Mr Thomson the poet of *The Seasons*, Colley Cibber a popular actor and playwright, and Fielding the author of *Joseph Andrews*.

Illustration from "Joseph Andrews"
(1742 Edition)

All these things Minerva and Astræa Hill told Charlotte when they came to visit her in her pleasant parlour above the hosier's shop; and the three spent many comfortable afternoons with *Clarissa*, sitting with wet handkerchiefs held to streaming eyes, while one read aloud, stopping often to sob unrestrainedly at specially moving passages. So the silversmith found them when he dropped in one day for a chat with his daughter, and when he saw the open volume before them he understood at once what was going on. He himself, sober and matter of fact as he was, had not been able to read *Clarissa* unmoved. He listened with patience and some interest while the girls poured out their praises of the book and their fears for the ultimate fate of poor Clarissa.

"If you could but see the piles of letters that Mr Richardson has received!" cried Minerva. "There is one written by a Mrs Belfour, part of which I have copied." She searched in her reticule for a scrap of paper, found it, and read:

> "I implore you to alter your intention with regard to Clarissa, and make your despairing readers half mad with joy. . . . If you disappoint me, attend to my curse, May the hatred of all the young, beautiful, and virtuous for ever be your portion! and may your eyes never behold anything but age and deformity! may you meet with applause only from envious old maids, surly bachelors, and tyrannical parents! may you be doomed to the company of such! and after death may their ugly souls haunt you! Now make Lovelace and Clarissa unhappy if you dare."

"It is to be hoped that Mr. Richardson will listen to these prayers," said worthy Matthew Stradling, as he rose to take his leave. "Meantime, I would recommend you to leave the book and get to your sewing, and think no more of Clarissa for the present time."

But this was just what the young ladies least desired to do, and they went on enjoying their luxury of woe. The Misses Hill related how deeply the story had affected Mr Richardson's "flower garden of ladies," as he called them—Miss Highmore, the daughter of the celebrated painter, the three Miss Colliers, daughters of Arthur Collier the metaphysician, the four Miss Fieldings (who had not

been made to suffer for their brother's offence; noble Mr Richardson!), the dignified Miss Mulso, the learned Miss Carter and her friend Miss Talbot, Mrs Donellan, "a woman of fine parts and great politeness," Mrs Delany, wife of the famous Irish divine, and many others. Charlotte told how she and her husband had followed the hapless Clarissa with tears and longings. "Will she be delivered from her sorrows and be happy again?" That was the question that agitated them, as it agitated a great part of the population of England.

They had to wait for the answer until December, when the last three volumes of *Clarissa* appeared. Alas! Mr Richardson had not relented. In a letter written just before the volumes were published he gave his reason: "I thought my principal Character could not be rewarded by any Happiness short of the Heavenly." So Clarissa, after a deathbed scene in which the agony is almost insufferably drawn out, and which yet is dignified and touching, went to receive that heavenly reward, and all over England the sorrow for her death spread, and susceptible ladies were plunged into the deepest misery. Strong-minded Lady Mary Wortley Montagu "sobbed scandalously over it"; the Duchess of Portland and Mrs Delany made themselves quite ill with emotion.

Even sober citizens like Matthew Stradling succumbed for a time to the universal emotion. But Matthew's sturdy sense quickly revolted against a continued indulgence in this orgy of woe. He resolutely put aside the book after one perusal, while many others luxuriated in continual rereadings. But he found his surest antidote in those other works which, now that the vogue of the novel was so triumphantly established, quickly followed *Clarissa*. *Roderick Random*, by Tobias Smollett, was published a few months later, and in the course of the next year came *The History of Tom Jones, a Foundling*, by Henry Fielding. This great book, though it did not take the public by storm as *Pamela* and *Clarissa* had done, gained a fame that has proved wider and more lasting. The ladies who adored Richardson found *Tom Jones* coarse and immoral, though Minerva and Astræa

Hill read it with delight, and bravely maintained, even in face of Richardson's somewhat peevish criticism of his rival, that the book had " a double Merit both of Head and Heart," that it had a regular design and a very moving close, that it " rewarded Sincerity, punished and exposed Hypocrisy, showed Pity and Benevolence in amiable lights and Avarice and Brutality in very despicable ones." This did not please Richardson at all, and the mortified asperity of his reply plunged both girls once more into floods of tears. They besought their father to assure Mr Richardson that they could never approve of a work " of Evil Tendency." " Girls of an untittering disposition," Aaron Hill wrote,

> are improper judges of what merit there may be in lightness when it endeavours rather at ironic satire than encouragement of Folly. . . . It [*Tom Jones*] has bold, shocking pictures, and (I fear) not unresembling ones in high Life and in low. And to conclude this adventurous guess-work from a pair of forward baggages, would everywhere . . . deserve to please if stripped of what the author thought himself most sure to please by.

Lady Mary Wortley Montagu also admired *Tom Jones* immensely, and wrote in her copy "*Ne plus ultra*"; but it was chiefly read and praised by men. To them its vigour and breadth and manliness, its exciting adventures—though many of them were scandalous—its humour—though much of it was coarse—and its realistic, lifelike characters made an invigorating change from the lachrymose sentimentality of Richardson's masterpieces.

Thus by 1750 a large and important class of readers—the novel-readers—had come into existence in England. During the second half of the century this class increased enormously. Richardson and Fielding, Smollett and Sterne, produced masterpieces which were eagerly and widely read, but the demand was still for more. How that demand was met we will see in a later chapter.

CHAPTER XXIX

NO. 1 ST MARTIN'S STREET, LEICESTER FIELDS

IN the year 1774 Dr Charles Burney, teacher of music, came with his family to live at No. 1 St Martin's Street, Leicester Fields, where Sir Isaac Newton had lived fifty years before. It was a comfortable, roomy, red-brick house, with three parlours, very steep and narrow stairs, and wonderfully painted ceilings. At the top of the house was a small glazed turret-room which Newton had used as an observatory and which was the pride and delight of the whole Burney household.

A very large and lively household it was. Dr Burney, its head, was kind and clever and full of fun, and a favourite with everybody. Mrs Burney—who was his second wife—was a handsome, dignified lady, bookish in her tastes, and ruling all the family, especially the girls, with a strictness which made her rebellious daughter Maria call her, with mock reverence, "the Governor." Then came the young people. Esther, James, Frances, Susan, Charles, and Charlotte, whose ages ranged from twenty-five to fifteen, were the children of Dr Burney's first marriage. Esther was now married, but spent a great part of her time at No. 1 St Martin's Street; James was at sea; the rest were still at home. The second Mrs Burney, who had been a widow, Mrs Allen, had three children of her own—Stephen, Maria (now married), and Bessy; and there were two children of the second marriage—Richard and Sarah, still in the nursery.

They were a clever, active tribe, good-natured and fun-loving, fond of each other, and united in adoring their father. Several of them had very strongly marked musical ability, and music, as was natural, was the main preoccupation of the household. But music was by no means their only interest. The whole family were eager and intelligent readers. Dr Burney had a large and miscellaneous collection of books,

and every one in the house was allowed to use these books freely. Mrs Burney had her circle of cultivated intimates who made up a sort of informal reading society, and the popular Dr Burney knew all the foremost literary men of the day. Visitors came constantly to the modest little house in St Martin's Street, not only to the "musical evenings," when the three sitting-rooms and the Doctor's study were crowded with musicians, singers, writers, statesmen, travellers, and people of fashion, but also to pleasant little tea-parties and on leisurely morning calls. All the literary gossip was heard there, new books were discussed, distinguished men and women advised the young Burneys as to their reading. If, therefore, we want to know what books were being read in these latter days of the eighteenth century we cannot do better than study the records of No. 1 St Martin's Street.

Fortunately, very full records are available. The second daughter, Frances, who was small and shy, not pretty like her sisters, but insignificant-looking, and known in the family as "the old lady," because of her demure, retiring ways in company, kept through these busy, lively, crowded years a detailed diary of the doings of the household. The diary was not looked upon with much favour by the ruling powers, and therefore Fanny wrote it in privacy, and did not obtrude it upon the general notice. She wrote also long journal-letters to an old friend of the family whom they all called "Daddy Crisp," who lived at Chessington Hall, near Epsom. These, with the diary, have been carefully kept, and so we have to-day a full and trustworthy record of the doings of this most interesting family and their friends, who lived and read a hundred and fifty years ago.

The first thing that we notice is that the Bible has lost its place as the chief and most familiar book of the household. Fanny Burney never speaks of it. She shows by various references that she is moderately familiar with the Scriptures, and has a more or less conventional reverence for them; but she quotes no Biblical phrases and her own language shows no signs of Biblical influence. "The most unfashionable of all books," said Hannah More, "was the Bible."

> Sir Joshua tells me that he is exceedingly mortified when he shows this picture [of the child Samuel] to some of the great—they ask him who Samuel was. I told him he must get somebody to make an oratorio of Samuel, and then it would not be vulgar to confess they know something about him. . . . I told him that I hope the poets and painters will at last bring the Bible into fashion, and that people will get to like it from taste, though they are insensible to its spirit and afraid of its doctrines.

The little Burneys had very little formal teaching, and were not much troubled with set lessons. Hetty and Susan spent a year at a select school in Paris, and Charlotte went for a short time to a Norfolk boarding-school. Fanny never went to school at all. There were in the eighteenth century no day-schools for girls of good family, and the boarding-schools, as far as education was concerned, were almost worthless. As for a governess at home, it was probably felt that a stranger would have found it difficult to accommodate herself to the free and somewhat erratic life of No. 1 St Martin's Street. The children learned to read from their mother or from each other, and after that they educated themselves. They had the free run of their father's library and the advantage of listening to the conversation of the cultured men and women who visited the house. Fanny made all sorts of resolutions for doing some really solid reading, and managed to accomplish a fair amount, although Mrs Burney required her to sew for most of the morning and her father took up many hours of her time in copying out his *History of Music* and his other works. She read Mr Hume's *History of England*, Stanyan's *Grecian History*, Thucydides' *History of the Peloponnesian War*, Middleton's *History of Cicero*, Hooke's *Roman History*, Thicknesse's *Tour*, and Lord Chesterfield's *Letters*. The *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* (in translations) she read for pleasure, and was never so charmed with any poem in her life ; and Plutarch's *Lives* gave her more pleasure than she could express. She and Susan studied French and Italian together, and read the *Henriade*, *Le Diable Boiteux*, and *Marianne*.

They all knew their Shakespeare well. There were in Dr Burney's library the eight volumes of Shakespeare's works edited by Samuel Johnson in 1765, for which the

Doctor had subscribed himself, and for which he had enthusiastically collected subscriptions from his friends. These books were often taken down by the boys and girls of the family, for Daddy Crisp, who was the St Martin's Street authority on all matters that had to do with reading, loved Shakespeare and had taught them to love him. But there was another influence more powerful than Mr Crisp's which was at that time tending to bring Shakespeare back to his own high place, not only in the Burney household, but with the reading public at large. David Garrick, the great and famous actor of the day, was a Shakespeare enthusiast. He had put on the stage many of Shakespeare's plays, himself taking the principal parts; and his marvellous acting and immense popularity had brought the public back to an appreciation of the plays which for more than a hundred years it had been the fashion to treat as crude, unpolished, and out of date. Other theatrical managers had followed his example, and a Shakespeare revival had set in.

Unfortunately, even Garrick, as a concession to what he supposed to be the general taste of his audiences, used sometimes the so-called "amended" versions of the plays, in which writers of a later age had professed to abolish some of Shakespeare's alleged inelegancies. When Fanny Burney went to see him in *King Lear* she wrote in her diary:

> He was exquisitely great; every idea which I had formed of his talents, although I have ever idolized him, was exceeded. I am sorry that this play is acted with Cibber's alterations, as every line of his is immediately to be distinguished from Shakespeare's, who, with all his imperfections, is too superior to any other dramatic writer for them to bear so near a comparison; and to my ears every line of Cibber is feeble and paltry.

Fanny scarcely exaggerated when she said she idolized David Garrick; he was, indeed, the idol of the whole Burney household. He was a close friend of Dr Burney's, and used to drop in at No. 1 St Martin's Street at all times and seasons, and delight the family by his drolleries and his wonderful impersonations of all sorts of characters. Fanny gleefully records that he came one morning while Dr Burney —who during the London season often started his round of

music lessons at seven o'clock—was having his early breakfast in his study. His barber was dressing his wig, Charlotte was reading the newspaper to him, and Fanny was making his tea. In came Garrick in one of his happiest moods. During the few minutes that he stayed he represented for their amusement, a vacant, stupid yokel, a " Raree showman " advertising Dr Burney's forthcoming *History of Music*, Dr Johnson asking for the loan of a book, and an auctioneer selling some of the shabby, unbound pamphlets that loaded the study shelves. All the time he was joking with the girls and making mock love to them ; and finally he convulsed them, and the housemaid who was washing the steps, by the horrible grimaces he made as he went downstairs.

It is no wonder that the Burneys adored him, and were ready to follow where he led, especially when he led, as he so often did, to the theatre. They saw him as Richard III, as King Lear, as Abel Drugger in Ben Jonson's *Alchemist*, as Bayes in Buckingham's *Rehearsal*, as Lord Ogleby in *The Clandestine Marriage*, which he himself had written in collaboration with George Colman, and which was the most successful play of the season.

As a family the Burneys loved the theatre. Fanny records how they went to see Goldsmith's *She Stoops to Conquer*, and found it " very laughable and comical " ; to Cumberland's *The West Indian* to see a friend, Miss Barsanti, in the *rôle* of the heroine, to Mason's *Elfrida*, and to O'Brien's *Cross Purposes*. When Dr Burney went to Oxford to receive his degree Fanny wrote a mock ode addressed to Dr Last, a character in Foote's very amusing comedy *The Devil upon Two Sticks*, adapted from *Le Diable Boiteux* of Le Sage, and there are constant jokes, quotations, and references in the diary which show that she must have been familiar with most of the popular plays of the time. Sometimes the Burneys got up theatricals among themselves. Fanny acted in an amateur performance of Arthur Murphy's *The Way to Keep Him*, at her uncle's house at Worcester, when she took the part of Mrs Lovemore and wore a green and grey gown trimmed with gauze, white ribbons and gauze apron and

cuffs. She was so nervous that in the first two acts she could hardly make her voice heard, but she improved in the third act, and in Fielding's *Tom Thumb* which followed, and in which she took the part of Huncamunca, she was so taken up with watching her little niece Nancy, aged six, who acted Tom Thumb, that she forgot herself completely and did very well.

Next to Shakespeare—indeed, before Shakespeare in the household at St Martin's Street—came Johnson. The great dictionary in two folio volumes stood upon Dr Burney's shelves. In 1755 the Doctor, who was then living at Lynn, in Norfolk, had written, so Boswell tells us, to Johnson

> begging to be informed when and in what manner his Dictionary would be published; entreating if it should be by subscription, or if he should have any books at his own disposal, to be favoured with six copies for himself and friends.

This had led to a correspondence between the two; and in 1758 Dr Burney came up to London and visited Johnson at his lodgings in Gough Square. They quickly became friends, but Dr Johnson did not become intimate with the family until two years later, though he gave a copy of *The Idler* to Hetty when she was quite a little girl. Fanny describes the first visit he paid to St Martin's Street, in 1777, and tells how he went round the study, peering with his short-sighted eyes at the titles of the books, while Dr Burney looked on a little anxiously, fearing that some of the works he had admitted there might not be approved by the stern and outspoken moralist.

It must be remembered that Dr Johnson's great dictionary meant to the readers of the eighteenth century far more than it, or any dictionary, means to us to-day. It was not only a book of reference to be used in connexion with the reading of other books. It was read and studied for its own sake with the utmost interest.

Rasselas too was on Dr Burney's shelves. Fanny read it when she was fifteen years old, and was "almost equally charmed and shocked with it." "The style, the sentiments, are inimitable," she says, "but the subject is dreadful, and

handled as it is by Dr Johnson might make any young, perhaps older person tremble." The copy of *The Idler* which Dr Johnson had given Hetty was, we are sure, reverentially cherished and often read; and we may be equally sure that there was a volume of *The Rambler* to place beside it. These were collections of the essays of Dr Johnson, which had been published periodically, somewhat after the fashion of *The Spectator* (*The Rambler*, 1750–52, *The Idler*, 1758–60), but had never been as popular as the earlier paper. Nevertheless, there were few households which possessed any books at all that did not number among them *The Rambler* and *The Idler*.

The favourite poet of the Burney family was Pope. The elder children remembered how the first Mrs Burney had read his works to Hetty before she was twelve years old, and Hetty had learned long passages by heart, and "spouted" them, as her sister said, to the others, while they regarded her with respectful admiration. But the "spouting" did not, apparently, make Fanny read them for herself. Nearly ten years later she wrote in her diary:

> I am reading—I blush to say for the first time—Pope's works. He is a darling poet of our family. It is with exquisite delight I make myself acquainted with him; and in serious truth I am glad he is new to me.

A few weeks afterward she read Pope's *Letters*, which made her "quite melancholy." In discussing them she refers to "the modest Digby," "the gentle, virtuous Gay," "the worthy Arbuthnot," "the exiled Atterbury"; but she does not say whether she has read the works of these gentlemen of whom she speaks so feelingly.

There are few references in Fanny Burney's diary to any poetry save that of Shakespeare and Pope. It was not a poetry-reading age. Mr Rishton, the husband of Mrs Burney's daughter Maria, read aloud to his wife and Fanny Spenser's *Faerie Queene*, and Fanny says she received very great pleasure from it.

She read the poems of the unfortunate poet Christopher Smart, who was an intimate friend of her father's. She thought *Harriet's Birthday* and *Care and Generosity* "sweetly

elegant and pretty," but she does not mention the *Song to David*, which is Smart's only piece of real poetry, and which he scratched on the wall of his cell with a key while he was suffering from one of the terrible attacks of lunacy which came upon him from time to time. Perhaps she never read it, for it was unsuited to the taste of the day, and was probably regarded at the time it was written as fanatical raving.

Newly published poetry as well as new books of other kinds was discussed at No. 1 St Martin Street. "Have you read Miss Aikin's poems, Dr Burney?" asked the famous traveller Mr Twiss, who had come to one of the Doctor's noted little supper-parties; "they have been much admired. There is one poem in them, *Come here, Fond Youth*, that describes the symptoms of love, which all the ladies I meet have by heart. Have not you, ma'am?"

"Me? No, sir," replied Fanny.

"But, Dr Burney, of all the books upon the subject none was ever equal to Rousseau's *Éloïse*! What feeling! What language! What fire! Have you read it, ma'am?"

"No, sir."

"Oh, it's a book that is *alone*!"

"And *ought* to be *alone*," said Dr Burney very gravely.

Mr Twiss perceived that he was now angry, and with great eagerness he cried, "Why, I assure you I gave it to my sister, who is but seventeen, and just going to be married."

"Well," returned Dr Burney, "I hope she read the preface, and then flung it away."

"No, upon my honour, she read the preface first, and then the book."

Rousseau's *La Nouvelle Heloïse* evidently was not read by the young people at No. 1 St Martin's Street. But they read English novels freely. Dr Burney's library, we are told, contained only one novel—Fielding's *Amelia*. Mrs Burney, however, was a great reader of all new books, and most of the novels of the day were read and discussed at the meetings of her literary friends, held at St Martin's Street. All the girls of the family adored Richardson. Years afterward

Fanny wrote to Susan reminding her of the pleasure they had had in reading *Clarissa*.

She discussed *Sir Charles Grandison* with Mr Seaton, the son of a baronet, and " a prodigious admirer of Hetty's "—who came in one day and found her reading Marivaux's *Marianne*.

" Did you ever read *Le Paysan Parvenu* ? " he asked. " They [*Le Paysan Parvenu* and *Marianne*] are the two best novels that ever were wrote, for they are pictures of nature, and therefore excel your Clarissas and Grandisons far away. Now, Sir Charles Grandison is all perfection, and consequently, the last character we find in real life. In truth there's no such thing."

" Indeed ! " cried Fanny. " Do you really think a Sir Charles Grandison *never* existed ? "

" Certainly not," replied Mr Seaton. " He's too perfect for human nature."

" It quite hurts me," sighed Fanny, " to hear anybody declare a really and thoroughly good man never lived. It is so *much* to the disgrace of mankind."

And from that they went on to a long discussion on wickedness and virtue, at the end of which Mr Seaton complimented Fanny on her " sensible, spirited conversation."

Fielding's novels she only " picked her way through." Their robust tone did not suit the particular, rather finicky Miss Fanny, though her father placed Fielding at the head of all the novel-writers. There is no reference to Smollett, but Sterne was a great favourite. " I am now going to *charm* myself for the third time with poor Sterne's *Sentimental Journey*," wrote Fanny in her diary ; and that she had read *Tristram Shandy* also is shown by several references there.

Mrs Burney too thought very highly of the *Sentimental Journey*, but some of the members of her reading circle held a different opinion. At one of their meetings

> Mrs Greville took the lead, and bore the burthen of the conversation, which chiefly turned upon Sterne's *Sentimental Journey*, at that time the reigning reading in vogue ; but when Mrs Burney recited with animated encomiums passages of Sterne's seducing sensibility, Mrs Greville, shrugging her shoulders, exclaimed, " A feeling heart is certainly a right heart ;

> nobody will contest that ; but when a man chooses to walk about the world with a cambrick handkerchief always in his hand that he may always be ready to weep, either with man or beast—he only turns me sick.

Goldsmith's *Vicar of Wakefield* Fanny did not care for at first. She had just finished *The Letters of Henry and Frances*, a novel in six volumes by a Mr and Mrs Griffiths, and had also lately read Rowe's *Letters from the Dead to the Living*, a religious work of imagination. These two books, she says, had left her " in a very serious, very grave mood " ; and in this mood she came to *The Vicar of Wakefield*. " It was wrote," she says,

> by Dr Goldsmith, author of the comedy of *The Good-natured Man* and several essays. His style is rational and sensible and I knew it again immediately. This book is of a very singular kind—I own I began it with distaste and disrelish, having just read the elegant *Letters of Henry*—the beginning of it even disgusted me—he mentions his wife with such indifference—such contempt—the contrast of Henry's treatment of Frances struck me. . . . I own I was tempted to throw the book aside—but there was something in the situation of his family, which, if it did not interest me, at least drew me on—and as I proceeded I was better pleased.—The description of his rural felicity, his simple, unaffected contentment—and family domestic happiness, gave me much pleasure—but still I was not satisfied, a *something* was wanted to make the book satisfy me—to make me *feel* for the Vicar in every line he writes, nevertheless before I was half through the first volume, I was, as I may truly express myself, *surprised into tears*, and in the second volume I really sobbed. It appears to me to be impossible any person could read this book through with a dry eye, at the same time the best part of it is that which turns one's grief out of doors to open them to laughter.

At least two of the minor novelists of the day were included in Mrs Burney's literary circle. " On Thursday," says Fanny, " Mama took us with her to Miss Reid, the celebrated paintress, to meet Mrs Brooke, the celebrated author of *Lady Julia Mandeville*." A certain Dr Shebbeare was present, of whom Fanny says, " He absolutely ruined our evening ; for he is the most morose, rude, gross, ill-mannered man I was ever in company with." She finds it " very strange that such a man should write novels "—actually he had written

thirty-four. " I must read *The Marriage Act* and *Lydia* [the most famous ones] nevertheless," adds this most voracious novel-reader.

The time was fast coming when Fanny was to be known as a novel-writer as well as a novel-reader. In January 1778 was published anonymously a novel which she had written in secret and sent out in fear and trembling. It was called *Evelina, or A Young Lady's Entrance into the World.* It did not, like Richardson's *Pamela*, have an immediate and overwhelming success, but its fame spread first among readers of taste and discrimination and gradually to a wider and wider circle. Dr Johnson read it and was delighted ; Sir Joshua Reynolds sat up all night to finish it ; Sheridan expressed the highest admiration for it ; Burke could not lay the book down until he had finished it ; and the proud Dr Burney declared that it was the best novel he knew, excepting Fielding's, and in some respects better than his.

Soon all the town was reading *Evelina.* The first edition was sold out, and Mr Lowndes, the publisher, reported that a lady of position had come herself to his shop, and entreated " Do, Mr Lowndes, give me *Evelina.* I am treated as unfashionable for not having read it." Gradually the circle of readers widened, and we hear of *Evelina* in the great houses and the parsonages of the countryside. James Woodforde, now rector of Weston, Norfolk, wrote in his diary on October 19, 1782, " Busy in reading *Evelina*, a novel lent Nancy [his niece] by Mrs Custance—there are three volumes of it—wrote by a Miss Burney—they are very clever and sensible."

The novel introduced Fanny to a new circle of acquaintances and brought a fresh set of visitors to No. 1 St Martin's Street. She became intimate with Mr and Mrs Thrale, the friends of Dr Johnson, and paid them long visits at their house, Streatham Place. Here she met Mrs Montagu, " the Queen of the Bluestockings," and through her was admitted to the circle of learned ladies who had become famous as the Bluestockings. These ladies had rebelled against the ideas of their day, which made it almost a disgrace for a woman to have any share of learning or culture. They had studied hard themselves, and had strenuously advocated an improve-

ment in the education given to girls of the better class. They were great readers, and loved to discuss the books that they had read. For this purpose they gave evening parties, where, instead of music or dancing or frolics of any kind, conversation formed all the entertainment. The wealthy and learned Mrs Montagu was styled their "Queen"; and others belonging to the society were Mrs Vesey, Miss Carter, Mrs Orde, Mrs Chapone (who had been Richardson's Miss Mulso), Mrs Delany, and Hannah More. They read poetry and plays and novels, though they disliked the high-flown French romances, which they thought unsuitable reading for young girls. They read all the new works on philosophy and science as they came out, and kept abreast of the times. These Bluestocking ladies petted Fanny, who was still very small and girlish-looking, and read her book, though Mrs Montagu, for one, does not seem to have had a very high opinion of Miss Burney as a writer.

Miss Burney's second novel, *Cecilia*, came in 1782. Meantime she had been reading industriously to clear her mind of the memory of the characters in *Evelina*, and had discussed what she had read with her new friends. Dr Johnson's works —*Irene* and the *Life of Cowley* and *Life of Waller*—she read under the direction of the great man himself. Standard works on history formed the more solid part of her literary diet, then came memoirs, letters, poetry, and novels. She read over again her well-loved *Sentimental Journey* and *Clarissa*. She also read *The Female Quixote*, a novel by Mrs Lennox, which she and the circle at Mrs Thrale's greatly admired, two novels of Mme Riccoboni's, *The Sylph*, another novel, *The Good-natured Man*, and *Much Ado about Nothing*. She went to Brighton with Mrs Thrale, and saw acted there Shakespeare's *Tempest*, "which," she said, "for fancy, invention and originality is at the head of all beautiful improbabilities, is rendered by the additions of Dryden a childish chaos of absurdity and obscenity."

Cecilia was enthusiastically received by all admirers of *Evelina*. Early readers reported that it far excelled the earlier work, that it was more serious and tragic in character, and contained scenes of heartrending pathos. So high an

opinion of Miss Burney's power of awaking emotion was generally held that some people refused to read *Cecilia*, fearing that they would be too deeply and painfully moved by it. The Duchess of Portland and Mrs Chapone, each remembering how she had wept and made herself ill over *Clarissa*, feared to renew the experience with *Cecilia*. When Mrs Chapone did at last read it she said that she could not cry over it "for very excess of eagerness." "I was in an agitation that half killed me," she said, "that shook all my nerves and made me unable to sleep at nights from the suspense I was in." "I need not tell you," wrote the Rev. Thomas Twining to his friend Dr Burney,

> that I gobbled up *Cecilia* as soon as I could get it from my library. I never knew such a piece of work made with a book in my life. It has drawn iron tears down cheeks that were never wet with pity before; it has made novel-readers of callous old maiden ladies who have not for years received pleasure from anything but scandal. I know two amiable sisters at Colchester, sensible and accomplished women, who were found blubbering at such a rate one morning. The tale had drawn them on till near the hour of an engagement to dinner which they were actually obliged to put off because there was not time to recover their red eyes and swollen noses.

Gibbon read the book through in a day, while Burke took three days, and when he had finished wrote a letter of most generous praise and criticism to the author.

The greatest honour of any paid to *Cecilia* came when Queen Charlotte, having caused the book to be read to her, was pleased to express her admiration of it and to show her interest by criticizing one of the characters. When the author and her friends heard of this mark of royal approval they were duly elated; and it gave especial pleasure to Mrs Delany, to whom Fanny had lately formed a warm attachment. Mrs Delany lived at a house at Windsor which the King had given her, and all the royal family were in the habit of visiting her in an informal manner. She was over eighty years old, but was still a delightful old lady, and Miss Burney loved to be with her and listen to her conversation. It was while paying a visit to Mrs Delany that Fanny first saw the King and Queen. They complimented her on

her book and talked genially on books in general, the King making that notable confession of literary faith : " Was there ever such stuff as great part of Shakespeare ? Only one must not say so ! But what think you ? What ? Is there not sad stuff !—What ?—What ? "

Both their Majesties were pleased with Fanny, and wished to show her some mark of favour. This took the form of an offer of a post as Second Keeper of Robes to the Queen ; and in July 1786 Fanny became a member of the royal household.

And here the chronicles of No. 1 St Martin's Street end. The diarist had gone into literary exile ; and when after four years she came back to her home it was not to the home in St Martin's Street. Dr and Mrs Burney were living at Chelsea, the sisters married, the brothers out in the world ; the great days were over.

CHAPTER XXX

THE CIRCULATING LIBRARY

A CIRCULATING library in a town is an evergreen tree of diabolical knowledge." It is well that the sober and learned gentleman who, it is believed, founded the first circulating library in England could not project himself thirty-five years into the future, and hear Sir Anthony Absolute bring this charge in a theatre crowded with people who were watching the performance of Sheridan's *Rivals*. That it was a mock charge, brought in a jesting spirit, would not have softened its sting ; for the circulating library, as it had developed by that year of 1775, would have seemed indeed " an evergreen tree of diabolical knowledge " to the man who had planted the seed from which it had grown.

His name was Samuel Fancourt, and he was a learned Nonconformist pastor who had disagreed on points of doctrine with his congregation at Andover, and had consequently come up to London to try to gain a living by taking pupils. Failure in this led him to think of other schemes. He wrote books and pamphlets, most of them theological, and many in the form of sermons or letters. But they were not favourably received by the public, and brought him in little. Then the idea of a circulating library came to him. He had perhaps heard of Allan Ramsay, the Edinburgh bookseller, who in 1725 had begun to lend out romances and plays to his customers for a penny a night ; or the notion may have been entirely his own. Some time between 1740 and 1743 he started his library, with a collection of books including all his own works and also, as the catalogue stated, books and pamphlets in English, French, and Latin. The subscription was a guinea a year ; but the scheme does not seem to have prospered, for the library was dissolved at Christmas 1745. It was re-established however, almost immediately, the sub-

scription being changed to a shilling a quarter, with a guinea entrance fee. This time it was more successful. The number of subscribers and the number of books steadily increased, until in 1748, when it was known as the Crane Court Library, it contained three thousand volumes.

The history of the circulating library during the next twenty or thirty years is obscure, though it seems probable that far-seeing booksellers, once the idea was presented to them, were willing to give it a trial. There is an advertisement in a book, published in 1743 by T. Wright, at The Bible, in Exeter Exchange, announcing that "At the said T. Wright's is opened a Library for lending all Manner of Books at sixteen shillings a year." A few years later a less dignified kind of circulating library seems to have made its appearance. Aaron Hill, writing to his friend Samuel Richardson, in July 1749, says that his daughters have "of late grown borrowing Customers to an Itinerary Bookseller's shop that rumbles once a week through Plaistow in a wheelbarrow; with chaff enough, of Conscience, and sometimes a weightier grain." From this library they have borrowed, it appears, a copy of Fielding's *Tom Jones*, published in February of that year, so that the itinerary bookseller must have been fairly well up to date.

Between 1750 and 1760 circulating libraries were established in Birmingham, Liverpool, Cambridge, and Brighton, and in 1778 we hear of a circulating library at Reading. Fanny Burney records in her diary that when she visited Brighton with Mrs Thrale in 1780 they wrote their names, as it was customary for visitors to do, in the book kept for that purpose by R. Thomas, whose bookshop and circulating library were on the east side of the Steyn. Just opposite was the rival library of a Mr Bowen.

The books contained in these libraries differed very widely from the edifying volumes in Mr Samuel Fancourt's collection. The middle classes had become prosperous, but their opportunities with regard to education were still, especially in the case of girls, very poor. Hence there had arisen a crowd of readers eager for books, but with mental capacity too feeble to be able to understand and enjoy any

work that required much intelligence or concentration. These tended naturally toward an inferior type of story, and as soon as the demand arose there was a great rush on the part of inferior writers to meet it. The novels of Richardson, Fielding, Smollett, and Sterne were real works of art, and their success, great as it was, had been well deserved. But many who had read *Pamela* and *Tom Jones* and the others had not the wit to see the fine qualities on which the value of these works depended, and were ready to receive feeble imitations with almost equal fervour; many readers even preferred them. So the novel started on a rapid downgrade. *Evelina* and *Cecilia* marked, as we have seen, a return to a higher standard, but after these no novel of outstanding merit was published until we come to *Pride and Prejudice* in 1813 and *Waverley* in 1814.

There was quantity, however, if quality was lacking. Novels were turned out of the presses of London by thousands, and found a ready sale at three shillings a volume. Some, like *Tom Jones in his Married State* and *An Apology for the Life of Mrs Shamela Andrews*, were openly founded on previous books and had little value as original works. Then came the novels of the second class—entertaining, readable, and in some cases true, though not great, literature; such were Walpole's *Castle of Otranto*, Mrs Lennox's *Female Quixote*, Amory's *John Buncle*, Mackenzie's *Man of Feeling* and *Julia de Roubigné*, Mrs Inchbald's *A Simple Story*, and Mrs Radcliffe's *Mysteries of Udolpho*. After these, the literary rubbish. There were stories telling the adventures of every class and description of hero and heroine—worthless fine gentlemen, apprentices, parish girls, princesses; of domestic animals, such as riding-horses, lapdogs, and even fleas; of a lady's ribbons, or her slippers, of a beau's cane or cravat. The patrons of the circulating libraries devoured each insipidity as it appeared with eager appetite, and came again for more.

George Colman, in the preface to his play *Polly Honeycombe*, first acted in 1760, asserts that his mother once found in the back parlour of Mr Lutestring, a silk mercer of Cheapside, a catalogue of the circulating library to which the young

ladies of the family subscribed. The thumbed and dirty paper contained eight closely printed columns of titles of novels, and Mrs Colman transcribed them all. There were three novels of Richardson's and three of Fielding's; there were *David Simple, The Marriage Act, The Adventures of a Shilling,* Defoe's *History of Colonel Jack* and *Roxana, The History of Betty Thoughtless, The History of Miss Kitty N——, containing her Amours and Adventures in Scotland, Ireland, Jamaica, and England, History of the Intrigues and Gallantries of Christina, Queen of Sweden,* and others of a similar character. The Misses Lutestring had probably read many, possibly all, of the one hundred and eighty-two books on the list, and had formed their ideas of life accordingly.

Polly Honeycombe, the heroine of Colman's play, the daughter of a rich tradesman, spends most of her time in reading these romances of the circulating library, and loves to imagine herself the heroine of each one in turn. When the play opens she is reading aloud *The History of Sir George Trueman and Emelia*:

> "With these words the enraptured baronet continued his declaration of love. But what heart can imagine, what tongue describe, or what pen delineate the amiable confusion of Emelia? Reader, if thou art a courtly reader, thou hast seen at polite tables ice-cream crimsoned with raspberries; and if thou art an uncourtly reader thou hast seen the rosy-fingered morning dawning in the golden east. Thou hast seen, perhaps, the artificial vermillion of Cleora, or the vermillion of nature on the cheeks of Sylvia; thou hast seen—in a word the lovely face of Emelia was overspread with blushes."

"This is a most beautiful passage, I protest," sighs the enraptured Polly. "Well, a novel for my money." Then she goes on reading:

> "Sir George, touched at her confusion, gently seized her hand, and softly pressing it to his bosom, where the pulses of his heart beat quick, throbbing in tumultuous passion, in a plaintive tone of voice breathed out, 'Will you not answer me, Emelia—tender creature?' She, half raising her downcast eyes, and half inclining her averted head, said, in faltering accents, 'Yes, sir.' Then gradually recovering, with ineffable sweetness she prepared to address him; when Mrs Jenkinson bounced into the room, threw down a set of china in her hurry, and strewed the floor

with porcelain fragments; then turning Emelia round and round, whirled her out of the apartment in an instant, and struck Sir George dumb with astonishment at her appearance. She raved, but the baronet, resuming his accustomed effrontery—— "

Here Polly is interrupted, so we do not know how Sir George's effrontery affected the raving Mrs Jenkinson. For the rest of the play we see Polly attempting to follow in the footsteps of " Betsy Thompson, and Sallie Wilkins, and Clarinda, and Leonora in *The Adventures of Dick Careless*, and Julia in *The Adventures of Tom Ramble*, and fifty others." She sends her nurse for a fresh supply of her favourite volumes, bidding her tell the bookseller to be sure to send *The British Amazon* and *Tom Taddle* and all the rest of the new novels. Fortified by these, she refuses to marry the rich and homely tradesman who is the bridegroom of her father's choice, and contrives ecstatic secret meetings with a lover whom she fondly imagines to be a nobleman, but who turns out to be the son of her own nurse. Her father expresses his opinion of circulating libraries in much the same fashion as Sir Anthony Absolute expresses his. " A man might as well turn his daughter loose in Covent Garden," he says, " as trust the cultivation of her mind to a circulating library."

Fifteen years after *Polly Honeycombe* came Sheridan's *The Rivals*, with Lydia Languish as its novel-reading heroine. The books which came from a circulating library of Bath in 1775 are much the same as those which came from a similar institution in London in 1760, except that there is more skill shown in devising titles and that these titles seem to indicate that the works are slightly less crude, but more mawkish. Lydia reads *The Reward of Constancy, The Fatal Connexion, The Mistakes of the Heart, The Delicate Distress, or The Memoirs of Lady Woodford, The Gordian Knot, Peregrine Pickle, The Tears of Sensibility, Humphry Clinker, The Memoirs of a Lady of Quality, written by Herself, A Sentimental Journey, The Innocent Adultery, Roderick Random*, and *The Man of Feeling*. They lead her to behave in much the same wrong-headed and sentimental fashion as Polly Honeycombe, though Mrs Malaprop seems to have provided

A Provincial Circulating Library

Such as Lydia Languish might have attended

From a contemporary print

her with serious literature which might have been expected to act as an antidote to the other kind far more generously than Mr Honeycombe provided Polly. Both of them have that universal classic *The Whole Duty of Man*, but Lydia has besides Mrs Chapone's *Letters* and Fordyce's *Sermons*, while Polly has only *The Practice of Piety*.

Nearly twenty-five years passed and the end of the eighteenth century was in sight when Miss Jane Austen painted for posterity the portrait of another young lady who, like Polly Honeycombe and Lydia Languish, doted on the circulating library and all its works. This was Catherine Morland, the charmingly fresh and ingenuous seventeen-year-old daughter of a clergyman in Wiltshire. Like most of her contemporaries, Catherine had picked up a smattering of education at home, and had so far profited by it that, "provided that nothing like useful knowledge could be gained from them, provided they were all story and no reflection, she had never any objection to books at all." This young lady went to Bath, where she swore an eternal friendship with another young lady, named Isabella Thorpe. Together they talked and danced and walked and read novels; and the style of work then most in vogue at the circulating libraries may be gathered from some of the conversations they held with one another.

"But, my dearest Catherine, what have you been doing with yourself all this morning? Have you gone on with *Udolpho*?"

"Yes, I have been reading it ever since I woke; and I am got to the black veil."

"Are you indeed! How delightful! Oh! I would not tell you what is behind the black veil for the world! Are not you wild to know?"

"Oh! yes, quite; what can it be?—But do not tell me—I would not be told upon any account. I know it must be a skeleton, I am sure it is Laurentina's skeleton. Oh! I am delighted with the book! I should like to spend my whole life in reading it, I assure you; if it had not been to meet you, I would not have come away from it for all the world."

"Dear creature! how much I am obliged to you; and when you have finished *Udolpho*, we will read *The Italian* together; and I have made out a list of ten or twelve more of the same kind for you."

"Have you indeed! How glad I am! What are they all?"

"I will read you their names directly; here they are, in my pocket-book. *Castle of Wolfenbach, Clermont, Mysterious Warnings, Necromancer of the Black Forest, Midnight Bell, Orphan of the Rhine,* and *Horrid Mysteries.* Those will last us some time."

"Yes, pretty well; but are they all horrid? Are you sure they are all horrid?"

"Yes, quite sure; for a particular friend of mine—a Miss Andrews—a sweet girl, one of the sweetest creatures in the world, has read every one of them." . . .

"While I have *Udolpho* to read, I feel as if nobody could make me miserable. Oh! the dreadful black veil! My dear Isabella, I am sure there must be Laurentina's skeleton behind it."

"It is so odd to me that you should never have read *Udolpho* before; but I suppose Mrs Morland objects to novels."

"No, she does not. She very often reads *Sir Charles Grandison* herself; but new books do not fall in our way."

"*Sir Charles Grandison!* That is an amazing horrid book, is it not?—I remember Miss Andrews could not get through the first volume."

"It is not like *Udolpho* at all; but yet I think it is very entertaining."

"Do you indeed.?—you surprise me; I thought it had not been readable."

What would Minerva and Astræa Hill and the other ladies who gathered at the tea-parties of their adored Mr Richardson have said? Sir Charles Grandison less than fifty years before had been declared to mark the summit of possible achievement in the portrayal of character. The next step, Richardson's admirers had declared, must be to "write the history of an Angel." And here was a chit of seventeen expressing surprise that anyone should read it!

But romantic young ladies were not the only subscribers to circulating libraries. Dr Burney subscribed for new books at Bell's Library, and Hannah More and James Woodforde were also occasional, if not regular, borrowers.

A lending library was established in connexion with the Royal Society, though up to 1825 no book could be borrowed from it without the loan having been formally sanctioned by the Society. Book clubs which served as small circulating libraries were being formed in country districts. "Thank you for your offer of Swift's works," wrote the Reverend William Digby from Coleshill, on July 24, 1766.

> They are arrived at this place, for you must know that we are civilized enough in this country to have instituted a club called a " book-club " where I never saw pipe nor tobacco, and take in all the new things we choose. This respectable corps consists of twenty neighbouring clergy and squires, chosen by ballot.

By the end of the century there were book-clubs and circulating libraries all over the country, and these seem to have been well supplied, at least in the case of novels, with the newest publications. In the list of subscribers to Fanny Burney's third book, *Camilla*, published in 1796, the names of many of these book-clubs are to be found. The circulating library has proved, indeed, to be what Sir Anthony Absolute called it, " an evergreen tree."

CHAPTER XXXI

POOR FOLKS' BOOKS

POOR folks began to be book-buyers when, in the days of the Tudors, the ballad-monger and the pedlar came among them, offering them wares that suited their taste at a price which they could manage to afford. Then began a great buying of ballads and broadsides, so that there were soon few poor men's dwellings that had not at least one or two of these enticing sheets pasted upon its walls. We have seen the Elizabethan ballad-monger at the corner of a city street. At fairs and markets all over the country his brethren plied their trade with the same vigour and the same success, gathering in a great harvest of pennies and half-pennies. The younger generation could read, even if their elders could not, and the ballads and startling news-sheets were read aloud until every one knew them by heart. In the inns there were often large collections covering the walls of the public rooms, and the workmen and poor wayfarers when they came in for their mugs of ale went over the old favourites with much enjoyment and greeted a new one with delight.

The pedlars, or chapmen, as they were called, carried in their packs not only a great bundle of ballads, but also a pile of story-books, which they sold for a penny or twopence or sometimes sixpence each. Most of these were abridgements of the old romances, and in this form the common people still delighted to read them. Some were more modern works of a humorous or a scurrilous kind, such as Barclay's *Ship of Fools* or *The Geysts of Skoggan*. Some were small collections of poems called "garlands," such as *The Garland of Delight, The Garland set round with Guilded Roses, The Lover's Garland*, and many others. These were generally known as "penny merriments," while religious tracts, hymns, and abridgements of larger religious works were known as "penny godlinesses."

All these, and especially the romances, remained high in public favour from the later years of the sixteenth until the opening of the nineteenth century. Nicholas Breton, describing, in 1586, " uncyvyl "—that is to say, country—life, said :

> We want not also pleasant, mad-headed knaves that bee properly learned, and will reade in diverse pleasant bookes and good Authors : As, *Sir Guy of Warwicke, Ye Foure Sonnes of Amon, The Ship of Fooles,* the *Budget of Demaindes,* the *Hundreth Merry Tales,* and the *Book of Riddles,* and many other excellent writers, both witty and pleasant.

John Bunyan, the tinker's son, who was born in 1628, said, in describing his ungodly youth :

> Give me a ballad, a newsbook, *George on horseback,* or *Bevis of Southampton,* give me some book that teaches curious arts, that tells of old fables ; but for the Holy Scriptures I cared not.

More than a hundred years later Thomas Holcroft, the son of a shoemaker of Orange Court, Lincoln Fields, tells how the gift of two penny chapbooks—*The History of Parismus and Parimene* and *The Seven Champions of Christendom*—from his father's apprentice " fired the blood of a poor, self-educated author," and gave him lasting delight. And of the last years of the eighteenth century John Clare, the peasant-poet, wrote :

> I was fond of books before I began to write poetry ; these were such as chance came at, sixpenny pamphlets which are in the possession of every door-calling hawker, and found on every bookstall at fairs and markets, whose titles are as familiar to every one as his own name. Shall I repeat some of them ? *Red Riding Hood, Valentine and Orson, Jack and the Giants, Tom Long the Carrier, The King and the Cobbler, Sawny Bean, The Seven Sleepers, Tom Hickathrift, Johnny Armstrong, Idle Lawrence* (who carried that Power spell about him that laid everybody to sleep), *Old Mother Bunch, Robin Hood's Garland, Old Mother Shipton,* and *Old Nixon's Prophecies, History of Gotham,* and many others.

The " penny godlinesses " were almost equally popular, and most decent families possessed a store of these, reserved for Sunday reading. Cheap copies of religious works, such as *The Whole Duty of Man,* were highly treasured, and were

often handed down through several generations. Richard Baxter tells of a poor day-labourer who had

> an old torn book which he lent my father, Bunny's *Resolution* being written by Parsons the Jesuit and corrected by Edmund Bunny, and in the reading of this book when I was about fifteen years of age it pleased God to awaken my soul.

John Bunyan says that his wife had *The Plain Man's Pathway to Heaven* and *The Practice of Piety*, " which her father had left her when he died. In these two books I should sometimes read with her, wherein I also found some things that were somewhat pleasing to me." Later, John Bunyan's own works took a permanent place in the poor man's library. Some—for example, *A Caution to Stir up to Watch against Sin*—were issued as penny broadsides ; others, like *The Life and Death of Mr Badman*, as sixpenny chapbooks ; there were rhymes for children in *A Book for Boys and Girls* and arguments on doctrine for those who opposed his teaching in *Some Gospel Truths Opened.* But his most popular book was *The Pilgrim's Progress*, the first part of which was published in March 1678, at one and sixpence. For the next two hundred years there were few households among the poor or the middle class in England and America where this book was not to be found. It took the place next to the Bible which had before been held by Foxe's *Book of Martyrs.*

Broadsides were also made to serve as news-sheets, dealing with actual events and with questions of the day in a highly sensational manner. There were harrowing descriptions of murders and public executions, with long speeches giving the dying utterances of the victims. These sheets were, later, used in compiling *The Newgate Calendar ; or Malefactors' Bloody Register*, which was published in or about 1774. It was in five volumes, and contained " Genuine and Circumstantial narratives of the Lives and Transactions of the Most Notorious Criminals of Both Sexes " and its compilers expressed the pious belief that it would tend " to guard young Minds from the Allurements of Vices and the Paths that lead to Destruction."

Some of the broadsides contained dialogues on social

The wonderfull dis-

couerie of ELIZABETH SAVVYER *a Witch, late of* Edmonton, *her* conuiction and condemnation and Death.

Together with the relation of the Duels acceſſe to her, and their conference together.

Written by HENRY GOODCOLE Miniſter of the Word of God, and her continuall Viſiter in the Gaole of Newgate.

Publiſhed by Authority.

London, Printed for *William Butler*, and are to be ſold at his Shop in Saint *Dunſtons* Church-yard, Fleetſtreet, 1621.

TITLE-PAGE OF A CHAPBOOK PUBLISHED IN 1621 CONTAINING THE LIFE OF THE NOTORIOUS WITCH OF EDMONTON

A tragi-comedy by Rowley, Dekker, and Ford called *The Witch of Edmonton* was based on this account.

subjects worked up into a sort of drama. In the early days of the Stuart kings the belief in witches and witchcraft was almost universal, and excitement rose to a great height at each case that was reported. "*The Wonderful Discoverie of Elizabeth Sawyer, a Witch, late of Edmonton; her Conviction, her Condemnation and Death; together with the Relation of the Devil's Access to her and their Conference Together,*" cried the chapman, and everybody rushed to buy a copy, and took it home to gloat over its horrors.

As the division between the Puritans and the Anglicans widened during the reign of Charles I the religious pamphlets became more numerous and more impassioned. Political differences came to add fresh bitterness to the contest. The younger and more hot-headed members of the Cavalier party found a vent for their high spirits and their loyalty in pouring ridicule on the "crop-eared knaves" they despised by means of street ballads. Most of these, although they were coarse and scurrilous, had some happy touches and went with a rollicking swing, so that they were easily caught up and became widely popular. The Puritans when they tried to answer did not do so well. They had no talent for ballads, and were obliged for the most part to content themselves with directing shafts from the Scriptures at their opponents. They expended much ingenuity in identifying evildoers whose stories and punishments were recorded in the Bible with certain of their own present enemies. In a tract, *The Debauched Cavalier; or The English Midianites,* the King and his followers were represented as the enemies of the chosen people, and the parallel was worked out in the utmost detail. These conscientious productions were apt to prove somewhat heavy and tedious; and as time went on, and the Puritans felt their party becoming stronger, the tracts grew more and more like long-drawn-out sermons under many heads. On May 2, 1643, the cross at Cheapside was pulled down, amid much triumph and rejoicing by the Puritans; and on the same day was issued a tract called "*The Downfall of Dagon; or The Taking Down of Cheapside Crosse*; wherein is contained these principles: 1. The Crosse Sicke at Heart. 2. His Death and Funerall. 3. His Will, Legacies, Inventory,

and Epitaph. 4. Why it was removed. 5. The Money it will bring. 6. Noteworthy, that it was cast down on that day when it was first invented and set up."

When war at length broke out the writers on both sides poured out their ballads and tracts in a white-heat of loyalty or of denunciation. Prince Rupert and his fellows sang their rollicking songs, and their troopers caught them up, until they were being sung all over the country. Coarse and abusive satires, with offensive references to personal features of the enemy, such as to Cromwell's red nose, and Fairfax's swollen limbs in *A Case for Nol Cromwell's Nose and the Cure of Tom Fairfax's Gout* (1648), were common. These the Puritans countered by sarcasms on the rich dress and effeminate manners of some of the Cavaliers, as in *The City Dames' Petition in the Behalfe of the Long-afflicted but Well-affected Cavaliers* (1647). In this the wives of various London tradesmen are made to complain that since the war began they have suffered, through the absence of their noble customers, not only loss of trade, but loss of those gallant and courtly attentions which were used to be paid them by the exquisites whose breath was " as sweet as amber," and whose persons and garments were so delightfully scented that they made the air around them " fragrant as the spring's first flowers."

During the Commonwealth the ballads and tracts continued to appear. Newspapers of a sort were now circulating through the country and spreading the quarrels of the two parties, but for the poor folk the chapman with his broadsides was still the main source of inspiration. The best of all the Cavalier songs, *When the King enjoys his Own again*, came at this time. The Rump Parliament was assailed by a torrent of invective in tract after tract, such as *England's Murthering Monsters set out in their Colours* and *A New Year's Gift for the Rump: The Rump roughly but righteously handled in a New Ballad to the Tune of Cock Lorel.*

With the Restoration came a lull in the war of ballad and broadside. The people went back to their chapbooks and religious manuals and left to their betters the more subtle satire of Dryden and Butler. There were many political ballads concerning the parties that were growing up at the

Court and various public events ; but for the most part these were not of burning interest to the lower classes and, except when some great excitement stirred the whole country, such as that which arose when Titus Oates discovered his Popish Plot, were not very popular among them.

There was, however, a growing interest in religious literature. Cromwell's disbanded soldiers had settled down to their old trades among their old companions, and their fervent and in many cases fanatical piety could not be without its influence. Many sects, some of them extravagant, some ridiculous, but all intensely earnest, arose. The most important and the most lasting of these was that founded by George Fox, to which, in derision, the term Quaker was given. The Quakers had a literature of tracts and hymns which they read diligently, and George Fox's *Journal* and William Penn's *No Cross, no Crown* were popular books among them throughout the eighteenth century.

But in spite of the Quakers and the other sects the first half of the eighteenth century saw the lower classes of England sinking into a deplorable state of ignorance and irreligion. This was partly due to the immense growth of population in newly established industrial centres, partly to the apathy of the Church and the general decay of religious faith, partly to the attitude of the rich and educated folk to those whose mission in life was, they considered, simply to serve their important selves. No new schools had been established to meet the needs of the large villages—some of them almost towns—which were forming, and no new churches had been built. A generation was growing up absolutely ignorant and untrained in morality or duty. The proportion of people who could read was far smaller than in the days of Elizabeth. Young children were put to work as soon as their strength allowed, and were brutalized by the company of their dissolute elders. Books in many parts of the country were almost unknown.

A religious revival was required before there could be any revival of education or of literature ; and this came with the two brothers John and Charles Wesley and their friend George Whitefield. The history of their movement cannot

be given here, except as it brought books and the power of reading them to the poor folk whom they taught. They worked in the face of intense opposition. "I thank your ladyship," wrote the Duchess of Buckingham to the Countess of Huntingdon,

> for the information concerning the Methodist preachers. Their doctrines are most repulsive, and strongly tinctured with impertinence and disrespect towards their superiors in perpetually endeavouring to level all ranks and do away with all distinctions. It is monstrous to be told that you have a heart as sinful as the common wretches that crawl on the earth. This is highly offensive, and I cannot but wonder that your ladyship should relish any sentiments so much at variance with high rank and good breeding.

But in spite of opposition and abuse Wesley and his friends went on, and gradually light came to the people who had been sitting in darkness. John Wesley himself rode all over England preaching and teaching in the districts reputed to be the wildest and most wicked, and he established a band of preachers whom he trained to follow his example. "He had," says Southey,

> such faith in the ministry of the printed page that he insisted on every one of his preachers being a colporteur or book agent. The preacher's saddle bags were filled with Wesley's publications, which he sold or distributed as he went to preach at the places in his circuit or elsewhere. . . . This helped to make the Methodists a reading people.

Wesley's publications included the hymns composed by his brother Charles—*Jesus, Lover of my Soul, Come, O thou Traveller Unknown, Hark! how all the Welkin rings,* commonly used in the version *Hark! the Herald Angels sing,* and *Christ the Lord is risen to-day.* These were published as penny tracts. His own sermons he published in four small volumes between 1746 and 1760, and these had an enormous circulation. Besides sermons he wrote many other religious works, such as he thought suited to the capacity of uneducated readers, and these he published in weekly numbers from 1771 to 1774. Each number contained about seventy-two pages, was stitched in blue paper, and cost sixpence. Later they were republished in thirty-two small volumes. Then

there was the "Christian Library," which consisted of "extracts from and abridgements of the choicest pieces published in the English language, beginning with the Apostolic Fathers."

Every one of Wesley's preachers had also in his bag copies of William Law's *A Serious Call*, which Wesley valued very highly, and which he used as a text-book of divinity in the highest class of the school which he established at Kingswood. Another book they carried was Wesley's *Primitive Physic*, which gave medicines and treatment for ordinary diseases, and in which good sound common sense was strangely mixed with a childlike faith in quack remedies. Pounded garlic applied to the soles of the feet it declared to be a never-failing remedy for hoarseness and loss of voice. This book, Wesley said, should be in every family, and so should *The Christian Pattern*, if possible. *The Christian Pattern* was Wesley's abridgement of Thomas à Kempis. There was another book, not on divinity, which Wesley strongly recommended to his followers, and that was Henry Brooke's novel *The Fool of Quality*. This he abridged and reissued in 1781 as *The History of the Earl of Moreland*. It is a novel of sentiment, but not as lachrymose as many of its class. It discusses many social questions and advocates many reforms, but it has interest, variety, and liveliness, both in its characters and in its incidents. "I now venture to recommend," said Wesley, in the preface to his abridgement of the novel,

> the following treatise as the most excellent in its kind of any that I have seen either in the English or any other language, its greatest excellence being that it continually strikes at the heart. . . . I know not who can survey it with tearless eyes unless he has a heart of stone.

All these books circulated widely among Wesleyans, and most of them reached the poor folk, for whom they were mainly intended. Those who could not read gained some knowledge of the books by hearing them read and listening to the talk of their neighbours. But there were still many whom the Wesleyans did not reach. In the last ten years of the century Hannah More found the country people round about Bristol in a state of almost incredible ignorance and

heathenism. "We saw but one Bible in the parish of Cheddar," she wrote in 1791, "and that was used to prop a flowerpot." She and her sister established schools in several districts, where they taught reading and sewing, and gave lessons on morality and the teaching of the Bible. She met with great difficulties, both from the ignorance of the people themselves and from the dislike of the wealthier farmers and the gentry to any sort of education for the people. It would, they thought, make them less submissive to their employers. The people themselves believed that she must have some personal motive in offering to teach them, and it was only very slowly that she won their confidence and so was able to make her schools a success. Even then the instruction she gave was very simple, for she herself did not believe in teaching poor folk more than would fit them to perform their lowly duties conscientiously and live moral and sober lives. "The only books we use in teaching," she said, "are two little tracts called *Questions for the Mendip Schools* and the *Church Catechism.* The little ones repeat Watts' hymns." Like Wesley, she found it advisable to write books to suit the capacity of those she taught, and she began a series of tracts, called "Village Politics, by Will Chip," which proved immensely popular and had a circulation beyond anything she had dreamed of when she began the work. She planned to produce regularly each month three tracts, consisting of stories, ballads, and Sunday readings, written in a lively and popular manner. Most of these she wrote herself, but she asked and obtained contributions from some of her many literary friends. Among the tracts which were most appreciated by the people were *The Ploughboy's Dream, Turn the Carpet,* and *The Shepherd of Salisbury Plain.* Two million of these tracts were sold in the first year. To this enterprise of Hannah More's, and its great success, we owe the Religious Tract Society.

But among all this ignorance and neglect there was growing up a small class of intelligent working men who, by great efforts and much self-denial, had managed to obtain enough education to make them long ardently for more. These turned naturally to politics. They saw that there was much

that was wrong and unjust in the present laws of the country, and they welcomed any guide who would show them where exactly the fault lay and how to put it right. Such men seized eagerly upon Tom Paine's *The Rights of Man* (1791–92) and his *Age of Reason* (1794–95). These and similar works had a great circulation among the working classes, and did much to strengthen the sympathy which was felt with the Revolutionists in France. In this small and earnest class of readers lay the greatest hope for the extension of reading among the poor folk of England in the new century that was opening.

CHAPTER XXXII

CHILDREN'S BOOKS

WE left the child at the end of the reign of Elizabeth with a very meagre supply of books that he could call his own. He started the seventeenth century with a hornbook, a Latin grammar, a book of Latin dialogues, and a few very unattractive text-books, probably in rhyme, on other subjects of study, such as arithmetic and history. Some lucky boys had a small collection of ballads, thumbed and dirty and fondly treasured; a few perhaps had a copy of a play that had been acted at one of the theatres, such as could be bought in St Paul's Churchyard for fourpence or fivepence.

As the seventeenth century went on into the twenties and thirties children came gradually to take a more important place than they had ever done before in the general life of England. It was a time of comparative quiet and peacefulness, and men had leisure for home-life. The Stuart kings were fond and indulgent fathers, and through their example a little more consideration and gentleness in the treatment of children crept into the households of their subjects. The extreme harshness of the Elizabethan rule was softened. Parents began not only to feel but to show a pride in their children's attainments, and this was good; but, unfortunately, so little understanding was there of a child's nature and capacity that this pride led parents to urge on mere babies far beyond the point to which their small brains could safely carry them. The children responded only too eagerly, and the age of infant prodigies began.

Lucy Apsley, born in 1620, who afterward became the wife of Colonel Hutchinson, was one of these. "By the time I was four years old," she wrote in a short account of her life,

> I read English perfectly, and having a great memory I was carried to sermons, and while I was very young could remember

> and repeat them exactly, and being caressed, the love of praise tickled me and made me attend more exactly. When I was about seven years of age, I remember I had at one time eight tutors in several qualities, languages, music, dancing, writing, and needlework; but my genius was quite averse from all but my book, and that I was so eager of that my mother, thinking it prejudiced my health, would moderate me in it; yet this rather animated me than kept me back, and every moment I could steal from my play I would employ in any book I could find when my own were locked from me. After dinner and supper I still had an hour allowed me to play, and then I would steal into some hole or other to read. My father would have me learn Latin, and I was so apt that I outstripped my brothers who were at school, although my father's chaplain, that was my tutor, was a pitiful dull fellow. . . . As for music and dancing, I profited very little in them, and would never practise my lute or harpsichord but when my masters were with me; and for my needle I absolutely hated it. . . . I thought it no sin to learn or hear witty songs and amorous sonnets or poems, and twenty things of that kind.

Little Miss Apsley was evidently not without a robust conceit of her own powers, and she was probably robust in other ways too, for she managed to survive this painfully strenuous childhood, and lived to a good old age. But the frailer blossoms perished. We read of one case after another where little children were allowed to overwork their immature brains without regard to their immature bodies. The most pitiful of all is that of little Richard Evelyn, son of John Evelyn of Wotton.

"After six fits of a quartan ague, with which it pleased God to visit him," the poor father wrote in his diary on January 27, 1658,

> died my dear son Richard, to our inexpressible grief and affliction, five years and three days old only, but at that tender age a prodigy for wit and understanding; for beauty of body a very angel; for endowment of mind, of incredible and rare hopes. To give only a little taste of them, and thereby glory to God, who out of the mouth of babes and infants does sometimes perfect his praises; at two years and a half old, he could perfectly read any of the English, Latin, French, or Gothic letters, pronouncing the three first languages exactly. He had before the fifth year, or in that year, not only skill to read most written hands, but to decline all the nouns, conjugate the verbs

> regular and most of the irregular ; learned out *Puerilis*, got by heart almost the entire vocabulary of Latin and French primitives and words, could make congruous syntax, turn English into Latin and *vice versa*, construe and prove what he read, and did the government and use of relatives, verbs, substantives, ellipses, and many figures and tropes, and made a considerable progress in Comenius's *Janua* ; began himself to write legibly, and had a strong passion for Greek. The number of verses he could recite was prodigious, and what he remembered of the parts of plays, which he would also act, and when, seeing a Plautus in one's hand, he asked what book it was, and, being told it was a comedy, and too difficult for him, he wept for sorrow. Strange was his apt and ingenious application of fables and morals ; for he had read Æsop ; he had a wonderful disposition to mathematics, having by heart divers propositions of Euclid that were read to him in play, and he would make lines and demonstrate them. As to his piety, astonishing were his applications of Scripture upon occasion, and his sense of God ; he had learned all his Catechism early, and understood the historical part of the Bible and New Testament to a wonder.

After this we can feel only a modified wonder at such comparatively mature scholars as Elizabeth Tanfield, daughter of Sir Lawrence Tanfield, who, before she was seventeen years old, had read

> very exceeding much, poetry of all kinds, ancient and modern, in several languages, history very universally, . . . all chronicles whatsoever of her own country and the French histories very thoroughly, . . . of books treating of moral virtue and wisdom (such as Seneca and Plutarch's *Morals*) and natural knowledge as Pliny, and of late ones, such as French Montaigne and English Bacon and of the controversial writers on both sides and a great deal even of Luther and Calvin.

John Milton, who had such a passion for study that from his twelfth year he scarce ever went to bed before midnight, is to be numbered among these prodigies ; and so is Katherine Philips—known later as " the Matchless Orinda " —who had read the Bible right through before she was five years old. But it is time to return to the normal children and see what they have been reading while their more gifted brothers and sisters have been revelling in these high intellectual exercises.

The book that was chiefly read by ordinary children, as by

Archeuant, was burnt in the towne of [illegible]

John Rest burnt at Dorne.

the county of Wiltshire, for denying of the sacrament of the altar, as they terme it.

¶ One Trapnel martyr.

Trapnel martyr burnt at Woodstock.

ALso much about the same time, was one Trapnel burned in a towne called Woodstock, within the same county.

❧ The history of three men hanged for the burning of the Rood of Douercourt, collected out of a letter of Robert Gardner, which was one of the doers of the same.

IN the same yere of our Lord, 1532. there was an Idoll named the Roode of Douercourt, whereunto was much

King of Dedham, Robert Debnam of Gilbergrunt, Nicolas Marth of Dedham, and Robert Gardner of Dedham, whose consciences were sore burdened to see the honor and power of the almighty living God so to be blasphemed by such an Idoll. Wherefore they were moued by the spirit of God, to trauell out of Dedham in a wondrous gaudy night, both hard frost and faire meane shine, although the night before and the night after were exceeding foule and rainy. It was from the towne of Dedham, to the place where the filthy Roode stood, ten miles. Notwithstanding, they were so willing in that their enterprise, that they wrat these ten miles without pause, and found the church doore open, according to the blind talke of the ignorant people: for there durst no vnfaithfull body shut it. Which happened well for their purpose, for they found the Idol, which had as much power to kepe the doore shut, as to keepe it open. And for proofe thereof, they take the Idoll from his shrine, and carried him a quarter of a mile from the place where he stood, without any resistance of the said Idoll. Whereupon they stroke fire with a flint stone, and suddenly set him on fire, who burned out to him, that he lighted them homeward one good mile of the ten.

[illegible] martyrs.

The blind ignorance of the people.

Superstitious fond idolatry.

The Idoll set on light fire.

This done, there went a great talke abroad that they should haue great riches in that place: but it was very untrue; for it was not their thought or enterprise, as they themselues afterward confessed; for there was nothing taken away but his coat, his shoes and tapers. The tapers did helpe to burne him, the shoes they had againe, and the coat one sir Thomas Rose did burne, but they had neither penye, halfe penye, gold, grote, nor testell.

False surmise alwaies ready.

The right handling of an Idoll.

Notwithstanding these of them were afterward indicted of felony, and hanged in chaines within halfe a yere after, as thereabout: Robert King was hanged in Dedham at Berchet: Robert Debnam was hanged at Cataway Causey: Nicolas Marth was hanged at Douercourt. Which three persons, through the spirit of God at their death, did more edifie the people in godly learning, then all the sermons that had bin preached there a long time before.

Robert King, Robert Debnam, Nicolas Marth, three Martyrs.

The fourth man of this company named Robert Gardner, escaped their hands and fled. Albeit hee was cruelly sought for, to haue had the like death: but the liuing Lord preserued him, to whom be all honour and glory world without end.

Robert Gardner escaped.

¶ Robert King, Robert Debnam, and Nicolas Marsh hanged for taking downe the Rood of Douercourt.

PAGE FROM AN EARLY ILLUSTRATED EDITION OF FOXE'S "BOOK OF MARTYRS" (1610)

The same woodcuts did duty on many of the pages.

their elders, during this period was the Bible. "I must desire you to send me down a little Bibell for him," wrote the Puritan wife of Sir Robert Harley to her husband in 1629, concerning her little son, aged six. "He would not let me be in peace till I promised to send for one. He begins to delight in reading, and that is the book I would have him place his delight in." Next to the Bible came Foxe's *Book of Martyrs*. Children never tired of turning over the pages of this huge volume, and looking with shuddering, fascinated terror at the horribly crude and realistic pictures of men and women suffering the agonies of the rack, the thumbscrew, and the scourge, or bound to the stake while the flames tortured and consumed them. To nervous children the book must have been the most terrible of nightmares; but none was spared. They heard it read aloud, they read it aloud themselves; they learned by heart the dying speeches of the victims and the detailed descriptions of their agonies; so that the world must have sometimes seemed to them to be full of sighs and groans and the blood of the martyrs sprinkled over the whole earth.

But even while they turned over these grim pages would come the news that the pedlar was at the door; and the children would join the eager group that had gathered round his open pack. Here, among many other treasures, were bundles of the chapbooks in which the age delighted. They were roughly printed on coarse paper, with ill-drawn, ill-coloured, delightful woodcuts, which were the more fascinating because it was often hard to see what they had to do with the text. Some of them were Scripture stories, but these took on an entirely different aspect in the light of the illustrations; Joseph's dream, for example, lost its symbolic character and became pure drama when the sun and the moon were shown looking down with broadly smiling faces on a little boy dressed in the full-skirted coat, breeches, and buckled shoes of their own day. There were ballads of all kinds—a whole collection of those on Robin Hood and on King Arthur; the old romances in a shortened form; a ballad on Dr Faustus, with a woodcut showing a beautifully realistic devil with horns and a tail; *The Babes in the*

Wood ; *Jack and the Beanstalk* ; the story of *Old King Cole* ; and the story of *Robin Redbreast.* The chapbooks were designed for adult reading, and did, indeed, form the chief, almost the only, literature of many men and women of that age ; but the children seized upon them so eagerly and appropriated them so decidedly that in time they established a proprietary right to them. By the opening of the eighteenth century the chapbooks had come to be regarded as belonging exclusively to the children, and the stories they contained are children's stories to this day.

On the whole English boys and girls had a happy time during the first quarter of the seventeenth century ; but life darkened for them as for their elders as the fateful years drew on toward the Civil War. Party strife brought into the religion of the Puritans a fierce fanaticism which made happy family-life almost impossible. Their very love for their children caused them to hesitate at nothing that could help to save those children's souls. Light-heartedness as well as light-mindedness must be driven out and replaced by godly fear and the solemn conviction of sin. Vain and worldly books must be banished as works of the evil one ; the chapbook was an abomination, the ballad a song of Satan. Banish all " telling of Tales, Stories, Jests, Rimes and Fables," wrote George Fox the younger in his *Warning to all Teachers.* As an example of the books which should take the place of these he wrote his *New Book for Children,* which consisted almost entirely of godly and moral maxims, and ended by exhorting " all ye wicked children who are of the seed of the evildoers and are learning of the evil one to scoff and to scorn and to do wickedly " to repent and turn from their evil ways lest a bear should appear out of the woods and devour them, as happened to the children who mocked at Elisha.

So the poor little children of these godly households were robbed of the treasure which the ages had slowly accumulated for them and which all their forbears, each according to his generation, had enjoyed. No one told them fairy stories or sang them the old ballads. They never played at " Oranges and Lemons " or " Nuts in May " or " London Bridge is

broken down." The fables with which boys and girls had been familiar for nearly six centuries these children never knew. They were not acquainted with King Arthur, or Guy of Warwick, or St George who killed the dragon, or any of the other national heroes. They were taught that their natural desire for stories was a sinful yearning of which a Christian child should be ashamed.

It is true that in their Bibles, which they were enjoined to read diligently, they found some of the finest of the great stories of the world, but these they were not allowed to enjoy, for their attention was for ever being directed to the cautionary side of the narrative. The brave story of David, for example, was spoiled for these little ones by lurid word-pictures of the hell-fire in which burned Saul and all those who had failed in carrying out, down to the smallest detail, the will of God ; in which they too would burn if they loved idle tales and the pleasant things of the world better than prayer and the singing of Psalms—which they were miserably conscious that they did. Foxe's *Book of Martyrs*, the sermons of Puritan divines, and tracts and pamphlets denouncing the practices of those who still remained in the outer darkness of the Catholic Church made up the rest of their reading. Life was a stern business in those days for the children of the Saints.

The Restoration came, but it brought little relief to the children. While a certain section of the nation—chiefly from among the higher classes—gave themselves up to unrestrained dissipation and excess the God-fearing part of the community, after the first burst of loyalty, drew back in horror. Anglican and Puritan alike looked on at the ugly spectacle of Charles II's shameless Court with shuddering reprobation, and to guard their children from its contamination became the chief of their many cares. Their warnings grew ever more fervent, and hell-fire more constantly threatened the luckless little ones.

A literature specially designed to meet the circumstances arose. James Janeway produced in 1671 a book which he called *A Token for Children, Being an Account of the Conversion, Holy and Exemplary Lives, and Joyful Deaths of*

Several Young Children, and this became the best-known and most popular of a series of similar publications. It had fourteen chapters, with such titles as " Of a Child that was much affected with the Things of God when he was between Two and Three Years Old, with an Account of his Life and Death when he was about Six Years Old," " Of a Young Lady who was greatly affected with the Things of God in Early Youth, with an Exact Account of her Admirable Behaviour on her Death-bed." There was one story of a little boy who would rebuke his brothers " if they were at any time too hasty at their meals, or neglected to ask a blessing. His check was usually this : ' Dare you do this ? God be merciful to us, this bit of bread might choke us.' " This precocious and unpleasant child died in most edifying fashion before he was twelve years old. Another story told of a little girl who had " a strange contempt for the world, and scorned those things with which most persons are much pleased, nor would she wear any lace or other thing that she thought superfluous " ; she lived only to the age of nine. William Godwin, the author of *Political Justice*, says that when as a child he read this book of Janeway's

> Their premature eminence, suited to my own age and situation, strongly excited my admiration. I felt as if I were willing to die with them if I could with equal success engage the admiration of my friends and mankind.

All these saintly children died young, and it seems possible that childish readers might have drawn their own conclusions from this and refused to imitate such examples of overmuch goodness. But the exhortation which came at the end of the stories put a fearful alternative before them. The author says to them :

> You have now read what other good children have done. Tell me, my dear children, tell me truly, are you like these children ? . . . Are you willing to go to hell, to be burned with the devil and his angels ? Oh, hell is a most terrible place ! Oh, child, this is most certainly true that all who are wicked and die so must be turned into hell ; and if any are once there, there is no coming out again.

The idea of hell was an obsession with these pious writers.

Examp. VII.

Of a notorious wicked Child, that was taken up from Begging, and admirably converted; with an Account of his holy Life and joyful Death, when he was nine Years old

1. A Very poor Child of the Parish of *Newington Butts*, came begging to the Door of a dear Christian-Friend of mine, in a very lamentable Case, so filthy and nasty, that he would even have turned one's Stomack to have looked on him: But it pleased God to raise in the Heart of my Friend, a great Pity and Tenderness towards this poor Child, so that in Charity he took him out of the Streets, whose Parents were unknown, who had nothing at all in him to commend him to any one's Charity, but his Misery. My Friend eying the Glory of God, and the Good of the immortal Soul of this wretched Creature, dis-

Page from "A Token for Children"

These books were frequently illustrated with old woodcuts which had already appeared in other books and had but the barest relation to the text.

They dwelt upon its horrors with a grim relish. They introduced it in unexpected places, so that the effect might be heightened by a sense of shock :

> When by spectators I am told
> What beauty doth adorn me,
> Or in a glass when I behold
> How sweetly God did form me—
> Hath God such comeliness bestowed,
> And on me made to dwell,
> What pity such a pretty maid
> As I should go to Hell !

This delightful verse comes from *The Looking Glass for Children.* " Your child is never too little to go to Hell," James Janeway declared in his " Introduction to Parents," and the anxious parents, taking his warning to heart, proceeded to obey with strictness his further injunction, " Put your children to learning the Catechism and the Scriptures, and getting to pray and weep by themselves." The poor babies, harassed on all sides, had little chance of a happy, healthy childhood. Horrors dogged their footsteps. " Sleep not in church, for the Devil rocks the cradle," was the grisly admonition of Thomas White, in his *A Little Book for Little Children.* " Be not proud of thy clothes nor curious in putting them on, for the Devil holds the glass. Fight not with playfellows, for the Devil will be thy second." White is very strong on the wickedness of reading books for mere pleasure. " Read no Ballads or foolish Books," he exhorts the " little children,"

> but the Bible and the *Plain-man's Pathway to Heaven,* a very plain holy book for you ; get the *Practice of Piety* ; Mr Baxter's *Call to the Unconverted* ; Allen's *Allarum to the Unconverted* ; read the Histories of the Martyrs that dyed for Christ . . . Read also often Treatises of Death and Hell and Judgement, and of the Love and Passion of Christ.

The last years of the seventeenth century saw signs of a lightening of the children's burden. In 1685 appeared a little book called *Winter Evening Entertainments* containing " ten pleasant and delightful relations of many rare and notable actions and occurrences, fifty ingenious riddles and sixty illustrations."

This change in the literature of the children proceeded from a change in the outlook of their parents. For nearly a hundred and fifty years religion had been the absorbing preoccupation of a majority of the English people. Now interest in it was waning. The fervent conviction which had upheld Anglican and Puritan in their strife with each other was fading into the conventional piety of the eighteenth century. Parents no longer desired their children to " get into some place by themselves and fall upon their knees and weep and mourn." They wished them to behave soberly and decorously, with a due regard to the Ten Commandments, but with perhaps an even stronger regard to what was considered proper by their neighbours. This had the happiest results for the children, as far as their reading was concerned. The fathers and mothers who had been brought up on the " hell-fire " tales probably remembered them with a mixture of terror and derision, and had no intention of introducing them to the next generation. They would be of no use in helping the children to acquire the urbanity and politeness which were beginning to be so highly valued. They were allowed to drift gradually into oblivion.

So while the fathers were at the coffee-houses, learning there something of the amenities of social life, the children were allowed to stray from the narrow, unattractive paths which had been marked " godly " by their literary guides and to take a few steps into the pleasant land of romance. It was only the well-trodden country of the chapbooks on which they entered, but to them it seemed boundless and very beautiful.

They had the old stories of national heroes, like Bevis of Southampton and Adam Bell and Robin Hood. They had the old fairy-tales, which had lately come to England in a new dress from France, through an English translation of Perrault's version—*Beauty and the Beast, Bluebeard, Cinderella, Jack and the Beanstalk, Reynard the Fox, Red Riding Hood,* and *Tom Thumb.* It is true that these stories had each its moral attached, but it was not necessary to take much notice of that. The story was the thing.

Richard Steele, in one of the numbers of *The Tatler,* tells

how Mr Bickerstaff once visited his little godson, a child who had " excellent parts " and " was a great master of all the learning on the other side eight years old." " I perceived him a very great historian in Æsop's *Fables*," said Mr Bickerstaff,

> but he frankly declared to me his mind, that he did not delight in that learning because he did not believe they were true ; for which reason I found he had very much turned his studies for about a twelvemonth past into the lives and adventures of Don Belianis of Greece, Guy of Warwick, the Seven Champions, and other historians of that age. He would tell you the mismanagements of John Hickathrift, find fault with the passionate temper of Bevis of Southampton, and love Saint George for being the champion of England ; and by this means had his thoughts insensibly moulded into the notions of discretion, virtue, and honour. I was extolling his accomplishments when the mother told me that the little girl who led me in this morning was in her way a better scholar than he : " Betty," says she, " deals chiefly in fairies and sprights ; and sometimes in a winter night will terrify the maids with her accounts till they are afraid to go up to bed."

The chapbooks multiplied and flourished. The writers, whoever they were, that kept up the supply had laid hands on *The Pilgrim's Progress*, *Robinson Crusoe*, and *Gulliver's Travels*, and versions of these appeared along with the older stories. New poems and ballads were also added to the store ; nursery rhymes which had been handed down orally for many generations now for the first time got themselves put into print and became chapbooks. Pedlars or chapmen travelled through the country and sold their wares at the villages and farmhouses at a penny, twopence or sixpence apiece. Thomas Holcroft, the playwright, tells how, when he was a boy at Newmarket, he read *Margaret's Ghost*—a ballad written by David Mallet about 1724 and founded upon four verses of an older ballad, the rest of which had been lost—on a sheet which was pasted, with several others, on the wall of a little inn.

The children had poets of their own also, and the names of two of these are very well known to our later times. The first was John Bunyan, who wrote in 1686 *A Book for Boys and Girls, or Country Rhimes for Children.* A shortened

form of this, under the title of *Divine Emblems*, was very popular all through the eighteenth century. It was a small book, and was sold at sixpence a copy. On the first pages were alphabets of large and small letters, lists of words of one syllable, lists of boys' names and girls' names. Then came the poems, in the form of " meditations " on various subjects, with the moral attached. There were meditations on a penny loaf, the sinner and the spider, the creed, the Lord's Prayer, the frog, the boy dull at his book, an egg, the whipping of a top, and many other subjects, showing a pleasing diversity. One of the shortest of these poems may be given as a specimen :

UPON THE HORSE IN THE MILL

Horses that work i' th' Mill must hoodwinked be ;
For they'll be sick or giddy if they see.
But keep them blind enough and they will go
That way that would a seeing Horse undo.

Comparison

Thus 'tis with those that do go Satan's Round,
No seeing man can live upon his ground.
Then let us count those unto sin inclin'd,
Either besides their work, bewitch'd, or blind.

The second of the children's poets was Isaac Watts, whose *Divine and Moral Songs for the Use of Children* had an immense popularity in its day, and lingered on as a children's classic well into the reign of Victoria. Even now, we can all quote *Let Dogs delight to bark and bite*, *'Tis the Voice of the Sluggard*, and *How doth the Little Busy Bee.* Children of all ranks learned Dr Watts' divine and moral songs. " Yesterday," wrote Hannah More,

> I passed the morning with little Princess Charlotte at Carlton House. . . . For the Bishop of London's entertainment and mine the Princess was made to exhibit all her learning and accomplishments. The first consisted in her repeating *The Little Busy Bee*, the next in dancing gracefully, and in singing *God save the King*.

The same lady in another letter wrote, concerning the poor children whom she and her sister taught in the schools

that they established, "The little ones repeat Watts' hymns."

We come now to the great pioneer of children's literature. In the early forties, when all the grown-up world was reading *Pamela* and *Joseph Andrews*, a Mr John Newbery, who came from Reading, opened a bookseller's shop in Devereux Court, without Temple Bar. The next year he removed to the Bible and Sun, near the Chapter House, St Paul's Churchyard, and this establishment has become for ever famous in the annals of children's literature. The first book sent out from it was *The Little Pretty Pocket Book*, in 1745, the object of which was, in the publisher's words, "to make Tommy a good boy and Polly a good girl." But the methods by which this desirable end was to be attained were not the methods of James Janeway or of Thomas White.

Book after book issued from the press of the Bible and Sun, stories and rhymes and reading matter of many kinds, but all of it interesting and delightful to the children for whom it was designed. After the *Pocket Book* came *The Circle of the Sciences*, *The Lilliputian Magazine*, *The Renowned History of Giles Gingerbread*, *The Twelfth Day Gift*, *Mother Goose's Melody*, *The Philosophy of Tops and Balls*, *Little Goody Two Shoes*, and *The Governess; or The Little Female Academy*. Later on, when Newbery was dead and his descendants were carrying on his work, came the two famous children's classics, Mrs Trimmer's *Story of the Robins*, which contained the adventures of those captivating birds Pecksy, Flapsy, Robin, and Dick, and Thomas Day's immortal *Sandford and Merton*.

Many of these books Newbery wrote himself. He had a remarkable facility for turning out just the sort of thing that was required by his public, and he worked with marvellous quickness. Sarah Fielding and Oliver Goldsmith were among the authors whom he employed to help him; and he included also in his series some of the stories from the old chapbooks. His son Francis tells us that the call for these works was "immense, an edition of many thousands being sometimes exhausted during the Christmas holidays."

One of the most famous of the Newbery productions was *Little Goody Two Shoes*, which, it is almost certain, was written by Oliver Goldsmith. Its appearance was announced by the astute Newbery in the following fashion :

> We are desired to give notice that there is in the press and will shortly be published, either by subscription or otherwise, as the public shall please to determine, the history of Little Goody Two Shoes, otherwise Mrs Margery Two Shoes ; with the means by which she acquired learning and wisdom, and in consequence thereof, her estate ; set forth at large for the benefit of those
>
> Who from a state of rags and care,
> And having shoes but half a pair,
> Their fortune and their fame should fix,
> And gallop in a coach and six.

This notice of Mr John Newbery's reveals at once a very important point of difference between the children's literature of the seventeenth and that of the eighteenth century. It is no longer a crown in heaven that is to be the reward for a good child, but a coach and six on earth.

Newbery's productions were strong and serviceable, the pages securely stitched together, and the whole bound in flowered and gilt Dutch paper. The price varied from sixpence to three and sixpence, and the enterprising publisher did not disdain to reduce his prices even lower than this for occasional purposes of advertisement. In 1753 he announced :

> This day was published Nurse Truelove's *New Year's Gift*, or the book of books for children, adorned with cuts and designed as a present for every little boy who would become a great man and ride upon a fine horse ; and to every little girl who would become a great woman and ride in a lord mayor's gilt coach. Printed for the author, who has ordered these books to be given gratis to all little boys and girls at the Bible and Sun in St Paul's Churchyard, they paying for the binding, which is only twopence for each book.

Another method of advertising which Newbery employed was that of introducing into a particular story some praise of the series. " My dear papa," says young Theophilus in *Blossoms of Morality*, " I cannot help pitying those poor little boys whose parents are not in a condition to purchase them

such a nice gilded library as that with which you have supplied me from my good friends at the corner of St Paul's Churchyard."

The Bible and Sun publications, as we learn by the testimony of a number of eighteenth-century child-readers, were highly popular and eagerly sought after. Leigh Hunt records that he read them with delight. Southey tells how an aunt sent him twenty volumes of the series as soon as he could read. George III was brought up on them. Hannah More, writing to a friend in 1786, says :

> My most serious studies have been a little book of Mrs Trimmer's, that wise and pleasant friend of little children ; it is, preposterously enough, called *Fabulous Histories*, which misled me into a notion that it was mythological, but I found a most delectable history of a Robin Redbreast, which I recommend to the younger part of your nursery.

And so at the end of the eighteenth century we leave the children—or those of them who, in the words of Master Theophilus, have parents who are "in a condition to purchase" such luxuries—with "a nice gilded library" of their own to read and enjoy.

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